1: Cohen E-4,5 (1956-1965) 1967 MS14 Kanuri MS14

1

The Setting

The Land and the People

FOR AT LEAST a thousand years the drama of empires rising, falling, expanding, and shrinking has been played out in an immense area of Africa at the southern edge of the Sahara known as the Sudan. These states, Ghana, Mali, Songhai, the Hausa kingdoms, Kanem-Bornu, Baghirmi, Wadai, Darfur, and others like them, from the upper Senegal River basin to the upper Nile, form a band from east to west across Africa. Their histories provide some of the most resplendent grandeur of Africa's past. Many of these states have now been consigned to the history books; Ghana and Mali have disappeared although modern countries have resuscitated their names; Songhai was destroyed by the Moroccans at the end of the sixteenth century; the Hausa states were altered as they came under the hegemony of the Fulani Empire of Sokoto at the beginning of the nineteenth century, and little is known as yet about the early states to the east of Lake Chad. On the other hand, Bornu in the northeastern corner of Nigeria has continued its sovereignty in the Chad Basin throughout a millennium of tribulations and triumphs and it goes on today organized as a separate emirate within Bornu Province.

Like most of the Sudan, Bornu is open savannah country, generally quite flat except for a few stable dunes covered with scrub in the north and several long low ridges running northwest to southeast in the southern part of the country. The ridges are probably ancient lake-shores of a great inland sea whose contemporary remnant is Lake Chad—a large shallow fresh water lake into which flow a number of rivers from the south and west. The soil is sandy and covered with scrub bush grass, and scattered trees, mostly thorny ones, except for the large spreading boabab, which dots the horizon here and there. In the 1930s the Nim, a hardy shade tree from India that thrives on the semi-desert conditions of northern Nigeria, was introduced to provide some forest preserves and year round shade in the villages. Here and there, especially at the bottom of the ridges, are large flat surfaces of hard clay that turn into gray-black mud during the rainy season. These provide clay for building materials and pottery, as well as water holes for the cattle of local villages and wandering nomads.

1: Cohen E-4,5 (1956-1965) 1967 MS14 Kanuri MS14

Geidam in the north, where another anthropologist, Abraham Rosman, and his wife were working. Discussions with Dr. and Mrs. Rosman helped all of us to see many of the unique features of Kanuri life that stemmed from our particular towns as against more general Kanuri patterns of behavior that were widespread throughout the society. We also became acutely aware of the kinds of variations that could occur across communities as they varied in size, ethnic composition, and quality of the political leadership. At the end of the first field trip, my wife and I spent three months in the capital city of Maiduguri looking at government reports and district notebooks, and acquainting ourselves with many of the special activities that characterize courtly life at the center of the emirate.

In 1964 and again in 1965 I returned to Bornu. On my previous visit the country had been a colonial holding of Great Britain, now it was part of the independent nation of Nigeria. My task in this second visit was to gather statistics on marriage and on divorce rates. But it also gave me a chance to see old friends, and catch up on what had been happening locally since my last visit seven years earlier. Some changes were readily apparent. A large number of deep wells were sunk all over the province, and these now provide enough water for a greatly expanded livestock population. Everywhere the cattle are healthier, fatter, and above all much more in evidence. They block roads and are seen herded in large numbers to and fro wherever one wanders over the countryside. Furthermore the people are less afflicted by parasites because the deep water is uncontaminated, as much of it was not during my first visit. There is now a large modern abattoir and a ground-nut oil refinery in the capital city, and in late 1964 the Nigerian railway finally pushed through to Maiduguri to connect the Bornu capital with Nigeria's national railway system. On the other hand, detailed questions about various traditional practices indicated that there have been few changes at the cultural and social level. At the political level where there were English District Officers and other officials of the regional government, now these posts are filled by Nigerians, generally from other parts of northern Nigeria. However it is for the most part correct to use the present tense in describing Bornu, and when this is not true I will attempt to mention the special circumstances that have brought on the changes.

Magumeri, our home for seventeen months in 1956 and 1957, sits on top of one of the ridges of Bornu, and there is a steep climb onto it from the motor road that travels along the bottom of the ridge for most of the year. During the rains, the road runs along the sandy top of the ridge, to keep clear of the large muddy areas formed at the ridge bottom. Magumeri includes approximately 2000 people about half of whom live in surrounding hamlets within the boundaries of the village area. It is a district capital and thus has a two-room primary school, a court house, and the large compound of the district head who administers twenty-one village areas, containing 50,000 people, living in an area of approximately 850 square miles. The village has a weekly market on Sunday, and is divided up into a number of wards under the village area head who is also the political leader of its surrounding hamlets and officially the political subordinate of the district head. Except for the fact that it has a somewhat lower proportion of non-Kanuri compared to most others, Magumeri is a "typical" Bornu village in terms of its size, occupational ranges of the population, and influences it receives from the capital and the world beyond the emirate. Indeed this is why I chose to spend most of my time

1: Cohen E-4,5 (1956-1965) 1967 MS14 Kanuri MS14

Given the fact that very many of the Muslim peoples of West Africa have legends concerning their origins in the Near East and often more specifically in Yemen, we can, I believe, think of the local origin theory as a mythical genesis story that is part of a widespread cultural heritage of the Muslim people of West Africa, likening it in this way to western stories about the Garden of Eden. On the other hand we do have "hard" linguistic evidence that the Kanuri people are related to peoples of the central Sahara northeast of Bornu. We also have very suggestive evidence from the geographic history that relates the people speaking these languages to one another and gives us grounds for positing immigration into the Chad basin and an increasing population density in the area. The exact details of this theory are matters for future research, but the major conclusion which places the origin of the Kanuri in the central Sahara seems to be a valid one.

At any rate, by the end of the first millennium A.D. the Muslim world outside the Sudan knew of the existence of Kanem, a sovereign state due south of Tripoli on the southern rim of the Sahara. Local traditions associated with the king lists (these have been collected periodically since 1850) assert that Islam came at least to the rulers of Kanem in the eleventh century. According to the traditions an eleventh-century Mai or king is supposed to have died in Egypt on his way to Mecca. Certainly by the twelfth and thirteenth centuries Kanem became a well-known state in the Islamic world. Trans-Saharan commerce was completely controlled, garrisons were built to protect the trade routes, and treaty relations were established with the Hafsid rulers of Tunis. In the mid-thirteenth century a travelers' house for Kanem pilgrims was constructed in Cairo so that they might have proper accommodation while on the long journey to Mecca via Egypt. At the other extreme of the Islamic world, in Spain, a poet from Kanem was renowned in the court of El Mansur (1190–1214 A.D.) in Seville for his praise songs of the Sultan. This was a great period of Islamic civilization and Kanem played its part in that florescence.

From the mid-thirteenth to the end of the fourteenth century a period of dark ages befell the kingdom. This is sometimes referred to as "the time of troubles." The dynastic chronicles indicate this period by including a great many rulers all holding sway for very short periods. The kingdom seems to have become a tempestuous stage for civil wars within and continuous attack from without. A letter to Cairo from this period has turned up, sent by a Kanem ruler, asking that the Caliph of Egypt send word to Sudanese Arabs who were helping Wadai to the east of Kanem raid amongst the people of Kanem for slaves even though such actions are considered to be against the precepts of Islam, since one must not raid for slaves amongst other Muslim peoples.[4] The main source of trouble is supposed to have come from one particular group—the Bulala. These people were either an allied subordinate tribe or a clan whose leading lineage had split off from the Kanem royal line and had then grown in its independence and power until its leaders challenged the Kanem control of the kingdom.

members of a lineage know exactly how they are related to all the other members of it, and together, they often form a corporate group, clan members may not be able to trace genealogical links with other clan members, and often clansfolk are widely dispersed." See John Beattie, *Bunyoro: An African Kingdom*, Case Studies in Cultural Anthropology, (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., 1960), p. 3.

[4] See R. H. Palmer, *Bornu, Sahara, and Sudan*, (London: John Murray, 1936), p. 195.

1: Cohen E-4,5 (1956-1965) 1967 MS14 Kanuri MS14

Finally in the late fourteenth century, a rebellious Bulala group east of Lake Chad upset the Magumi Sefuwa rulers of Kanem, who ultimately came to the southwest portion of the Chad basin to establish what later became the empire of Bornu.

The collapse of the great Kanem empire in the fourteenth century is attributed by tradition to internal civil wars resulting from the Bulala revolt against the Sefuwa dynasty. The ultimate cause is rationalized in legend by an alleged irreligious act of the seventeenth king or Mai of Kanem, one Dunama, (*ca.* 1220–1260 A.D.) who is supposed to have "laid the foundations for the ensuing disaster of the empire by opening the sacred talisman of Bornu" which subsequently provoked men of ambition to entreat against the state.[8] It may or may not be true, but it is very likely not the entire explanation even if we were to know what the "sacred talisman" was—which we do not; knowledge of its meaning and content have long since disappeared. Other reasons for the collapse of the kingdom besides that of a civil war against the Bulala can be suggested. The kingdom was in all likelihood not highly centralized and the nobles could quite easily unite, obtain outside help, and try to gain control. Indeed all of the traditions of the Bulala tell of them obtaining help from the Tubu of the central Sahara (a rebellious group who were tributary to Kanem) against the ruling Kanem dynasty.

Another factor is the nature of succession to the throne. Throughout the Sudan, and for as long as any traditions go back in Bornu, succession to the throne has always been open to those whose fathers have been monarchs. However, given many short reigns, this custom increases the number of contenders enormously and therefore exacerbates competition for royal office in the state so that the danger of civil wars and lack of unity is accelerated; the state is then much weakened as an effective political force. In other words, given a few short reigns, the possibility that more will follow becomes even greater unless a strong man with very strong backing emerges to quell the factions supporting various royal contenders. Finally it should be realized that Bornu was a much greener land than Kanem and it might have actually attracted the Kanem ruling group and their followers away from the drier, more inhospitable northern shores of Lake Chad. Certainly the kingdom of Kanem was not of such a nature that it suddenly collapsed when people (later to be called Kanuri) left. The Bulala clan assumed the leadership and Kanem continued as a sovereign state while the Kanuri tried, unsuccessfully at first, to reconquer their lost empire.

By the end of the fifteenth century the Sefuwa and their clan, the Magumi, had obtained sovereignty to the southwest of Lake Chad, and under a series of able monarchs they established their new kingdom of Bornu as a great power in the Sudan. The first of these rulers to organize and establish a really powerful state was a man named Ali Ghajedeni (*ca.* 1470–1500 A.D.), the forty-eighth monarch on the Sefuwa dynastic list. He built a new capital called Birni Ngazargamo, "the walled fortress," at the north end of Bornu and united this new kingdom under his control. Ali is supposed to have reconquered Kanem and re-established control over the Saharan trade while making war continually against Songhai to the west over the subjugation of the Hausa states and the east-west trade routes across the Sudan. His reign was followed by a series of others no less nota-

[8] H. Barth, *Travels and Discoveries in North and Central Africa*, Vol. II, (London: Longmans, Green & Co., Ltd., 1857), p. 637.

1: Cohen E-4,5 (1956-1965) 1967 MS14 Kanuri MS14

ble, and these men maintained Bornu at an apogee of greatness until well into the seventeenth century. One of these rulers, Idris Alooma, had a court scribe at the beginning of the seventeenth century, who wrote a number of accounts of his royal master's military expeditions. Luckily these have survived to give us a picture of Bornu warfare and government in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. It was during this period, too, that Bornu was first mentioned on European maps, and from this time forward its fame became part of the legends of unknown kingdoms that lay inside the unexplored interior of Africa.

Bornu traditions claim that the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries witnessed a decline in the power of the state. This is explained by the claim that the monarchy was becoming weak and overburdened with pomp, rituals, and religious study by the monarch. The ruling Mai appeared in public in a *fanadir*, or cage, which only his most trusted servants could approach and rarely led military expeditions himself. Much of this may be a reinterpretation of Bornu history by the second dynasty and their followers, who would naturally have played up the failures of the previous regime, when they took over in the nineteenth century. Contrarily there are traditions of many successful military campaigns during this period and Bornu's reputation as a great kingdom was still very widespread. Thus a wandering Englishman, Richard Tulley, who visited Tripoli at the end of the eighteenth century, spoke glowingly of what he had heard of Bornu's power. Parenthetically, he claimed that one of the Kanuri noblewomen living in Tripoli could speak the Italian language fluently.[6] On the other side of the case, Tuareg and Tubu raiders attacked the northern boundaries of Bornu and harassed the caravans with greater intensity than before.

The activities of these raiders are said to have increased during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, but it is important to realize that the entire southern Sahara was a hotbed of unrest during this two hundred year period. In the 1590s the armies of El Mansur of Morocco finally managed to cross the Sahara and destroy the great empire of Songhai. Its cities of Timbuctu and Gau never again became the great emporia of trade, politics, and learning they had once been. The Moroccans could not establish, so far from home, any stable administrative organization capable of replacing the one they had destroyed. This suddenly released vassal groups in the Sahara, many of whom bordered on Bornu, and these were now free to raid, stimulate revolts, and pillage caravans, while their cousins to the west fought over the remains of the Songhai empire and the control of western trade routes across the Sahara. It was during this same period of unrest that, all across the Sudan, wandering holy men, especially nomadic Fulani of Futa Djallon in Guinea, in Masina in the Upper Niger, and even in present day Nigeria, were expressing this disorder in religious terms. They preached through their leaders for a return to a truer and purer form of Islam. Often they claimed that those round them were pagans and had to be subdued in a holy war to reestablish Muslim order and law. It is in the light of all this turbulence that the so-called decline of Bornu in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries should be seen. Elsewhere empires were tottered or being formed, as in Futa Djallon; but Bornu remained, shaken perhaps by the general unrest of the period but still it survived, controlled its trade routes,

[6] R. Tulley, *Letters Written During a Ten Years' Residence at the Court of Tripoli*, Vol. II, (London: 1819), p. 51.

1: Cohen E-4,5 (1956-1965) 1967 MS14 Kanuri MS14

ruled its territory, and attempted to keep the peace with its neighbors and tributary states.

At the beginning of the nineteenth century, the area of what is now Northern Nigeria was rocked by the Fulani wars under a religious leader, Othman dan Fodio, who proclaimed a *Jihad* or holy war. Ultimately these developments resulted in the founding of the empire of Sokoto. In Bornu the local Fulani organized an attack on the Kanuri kingdom, not so much to support the Sokoto Empire, as to take advantage of it and set up principalities of their own. By 1808, the Fulani in Bornu constituted a dangerous threat. Indeed they had succeeded in attacking, defeating and sacking the ancient capital of Bornu, Birni Ngazargamo. When this happened the ruler and his followers fled towards Lake Chad and were not able to return to the city until some unexpected aid from Kanem enabled them to deliver a powerful defeat to the Fulani forces some six weeks after they had abandoned the capital. A few years later in the winter of 1811–1812 another Fulani force attacked and pillaged the capital. Again the Kanuri were helped by this same Kanembu chief or Shehu who defeated the Fulani and sent them fleeing westward to the borders of Bornu.

However, this aid was to change the entire history of the empire. From 1812 onwards the traditional Bornu government lost its control of the state. The Shehu, Mohammed el Aminu, El Kanemi, or Shehu Laminu as he is remembered locally, had the only effective armed force in the Bornu kingdom, and he used this to control sporadic Fulani uprisings that continued until at least the 1820s. Both the traditional government and the Shehu moved away from the western and northern boundaries and set up in adjacent towns near the west shore of Lake Chad. People soon realized that the Shehu held power in the state and flocked to his town, while that of the old Magumi Sefuwa monarch became a small redoubt for those still loyal to the ancient dynasty. The former leaders still retained the royal title, held court, and collected or were given some of the state revenues. When they intrigued against Shehu Laminu, he simply deposed them. At the same time he made bargains with rival claimants to the old throne so that any changes in the royal office, made under his direction, would be to his own advantage. Meanwhile the ancient rulers came more and more to be simply ceremonial puppets in the hands of the real ruler of Bornu, Shehu Laminu.

Yet Laminu never asserted ultimate control over the kingdom. Even after he had built a new capital, at Kuka, for himself and his dependents, the small village of Birni nearby was maintained for the ancient monarchy. Across the entire Sudan and beyond, however, he was recognized as the real ruler of Bornu. He was the leader of its administration and his political, military, and judicial sagacity were and still are lauded in praise songs that match these secular skills with his supernatural powers. Indeed his fame spread to Europe as well. This resulted from the writings of Denham and Clapperton, who crossed the desert in the 1820s and remained for an extended period in Bornu learning about its people and of the double regency under Shehu Laminu's control. Laminu died in 1835 and it was not until a decade later in 1845 or 1846 that his son, Omar, finally did away with the last remaining members of the Sefuwa dynasty proclaiming himself and his royal heirs to be the only rulers of Bornu. This was the occasion for the formal inception of Bornu's second dynasty whose descendants are the ruling family in the kingdom at the pres-

1: Cohen E-4,5 (1956-1965) 1967 MS14 Kanuri MS14

175 642 643 ent time. It was during Shehu Omar's reign that Barth, the famous African explorer, visited Bornu and obtained the first written account of its history.

175 843 [669] The descendants of Shehu Laminu ruled throughout the rest of the nineteenth century without undue excitement. There were always succession problems indicated by struggles for the throne among possible heirs and during the 1850s there was even a revolt in which a prince of the realm overturned his older brother for a few months until the deposed monarch was able to gather his forces and recapture the government. But such events had always been the common currency of Bornu's history.

175 648 Later in the century, however, a tragedy befell the kingdom. A marauding brigand of the Sudan who had gathered around himself an army of well-disciplined and trained soldiers slashed his way westward across Africa conquering and pillaging as he went. In 1893 he crossed over into Bornu and demolished the capital, defeating the Bornu army and sending the Shehu with some of his followers fleeing to the north and west of Bornu. This man, Rabeh, is still remembered today in Bornu for the tyrannical hold he attempted to establish and for the plundering and sacking of many Bornu villages which he carried out while subduing the state. Eventually he built himself a capital in southeast Bornu and married his daughter to the son of the Emir of Sokoto. Rabeh provides some interesting grounds for speculation. For had colonial expansion into the area not conflicted with Rabeh's own plans, he might very likely have founded Bornu's third dynasty. As it was Britain, France, and Germany were carving up West Africa for themselves.

The French arrived first and soon found themselves at war with Rabeh. Eventually he was defeated and killed, and although his sons attempted to keep control of their father's new found kingdom, it was a futile gesture in the face of French arms. By 1902 the British had taken over what is now Bornu province in northeastern Nigeria; the Germans obtained the Cameroons—containing Rabeh's old capital, and the French set up their headquarters at Fort Lamy in what is now Chad. The old Kanembu Shehu was put on the throne again by the French at Dikwa (Rabeh's capital) and was then maintained by the Germans. In the scramble over [631] territory that characterized this period, the British persuaded the Shehu to return to Nigerian territory, where they have been ever since as rulers of Bornu.

The British first brought the Shehu to Kuka, the nineteenth-century capital of the Kanembu Shehus, which they had promised to rebuild for him as part of the bargain for his return. They set up their own headquarters in the village of Magumeri and tried to administer the state from these two centers. The job of administration from Magumeri proved impossible, as did the prospect of rebuilding Kuka; it had been sacked and demolished during the Rabeh period. In 1905 the colonial government decided to set up a new capital at Maiduguri in southern Bornu which would serve as a center for both the emirate and the Province of Bornu. Today it still serves both these functions and is the major urban center of the area.

The British also reorganized the political structure of the state, and geared it into the wider colonial government they were evolving for Northern Nigeria as a whole under the leadership of Lord Lugard. Under Lugard's direction they also [439] stopped the trans-Saharan trade, especially in slaves, and oriented Bornu's economy southwards towards the Guinea Coast and the rest of Nigeria. In 1914 they quietly, and with practically no incident, took over the Northern Cameroons from the Ger-

1: Cohen E-4,5 (1956-1965) 1967 MS14 Kanuri MS14

mans and ruled it after World War I as a League of Nations Trust Territory, (later a U.N. Trust Territory) which meant in practice that it was part of the administrative responsibility of the colonial officials in Northern Nigeria. To appreciate more clearly what changes were brought about by colonialism, however, it is necessary to understand something of the social, economic, and in particular the political structure of Bornu, as it developed during pre-colonial times, and it is to this task that the remainder of the chapter is devoted.

Kanem-Bornu: The Social and Political Background

Only the sketchiest oddments of information are available about the nature of Kanem society. One Arabic record speaks of its capital as a city of tents, and traditions tell of a "Council of Nobles" that had a great deal of power over decision-making by the king, or Mai as he was called. From this and a few other data, such as the emphasis placed on the clan membership of persons mentioned in the early periods of the dynastic lists, we can attempt a reconstruction that fits the facts. The early kingdom seems to have been made up of patrilineal, named clans under senior or noble lineages (also named) whose heads formed the so-called "Council of Nobles" under the king or Mai. The Mai himself was head of the senior lineage of a senior clan considered to be the most important or powerful in the region. In all probability the term "Mai" or "king" was used for all leaders of clans just as it is today among some of the nomadic and semi-nomadic peoples of the Sahara to the north of Lake Chad who are closely related to the Kanuri. It also appears that the great Kanuri king lists are just what local people say they are—lists of the leaders of the Magumi Sefuwa or Sefuwa lineage heads of the Magumi clan. People in the clan considered themselves related by ties of descent to a common ancestor; but they could not describe the exact link with him, while they could describe the genealogical ties through men that made them all Sefuwa. Very probably these people utilized both cattle and domesticated plants although their early city of tents, referred to by Arabic historians, also suggests a greater emphasis on nomadism and the use of cattle. This is consistent with the clan organization described above; indeed this form of organization is widespread among nomadic and semi-nomadic peoples in the Sahara, North Africa, the Horn of Africa, and Arabia. Later, as attested by the ruins at Garamoulé northwest of Lake Chad they probably built more permanent settlements and very likely used slaves from the south of Lake Chad as trade goods and as agricultural laborers.

How centralized and developed the early stages of the Kanem state really were is an intriguing and difficult question and one that can be solved only by extensive historical and archaeological research. Certainly concepts of statecraft from Islamic areas to the north of the desert and trips by Kanem monarchs to Mecca would have acquainted the rulers with the ideas of very highly centralized states. How much this actually affected Bornu is unknown, although it is possible that tensions over the power of the central monarch were another reason for the civil strife which led eventually to the migration of the Sefuwa from Kanem to Bornu.

After the Sefuwa set up their kingdom in Bornu the state became a much more highly organized and centrally controlled political system. The people who

1: Cohen E-4,5 (1956-1965) 1967 MS14 Kanuri MS14

175 642 came to Bornu—and who also came to be called Kanuri about this time—were the Sefuwa, their fellow Magumi clansmen and loyal followers, clients and slaves. The traditions declare that the leader who finally founded the new capital of Birni Ngazargamo curbed the power of his own nobles and insisted that all of them (except one who protected the western boundaries) should live in the capital, leaving subordinates to administer their fief-holdings.[1] It should also be remembered that 175 this newly formed Bornu kingdom (*ca.* 1450–1550 A.D.) tried to regain control over 642 Kanem and many of its other lost vassal territories in the Chad Basin and the 648 southern desert. Thus they very quickly attacked and defeated Bilma 400 miles to the north of Lake Chad which was the center for the Saharan salt trade. They also had to defend the kingdom against raiding desert Tuareg and the rising power of Songhai in the west.

Kanem was a state organized around a confederacy of clans, with one clan and its leading lineage having a senior status. The migration of this leading group into Bornu helps to explain why the Bornu kingdom was more centralized than its 175 predecessor as a political system. In Bornu the Magumi Sefuwa had no other re- 64 lated clan or clan leaders to share power with; instead they were confronted by a group of pagan peoples spoken of under the general term of "So" in the traditions. Against these people they fought battles of conquest to establish their rule in the area and in the end absorbed many of them into a group known today as the Kanuri. It would have been much simpler to unify this one group under a leader who had no rival clan or clan leaders to cope with. Thus the new situation in Bornu 175 afforded both a stimulus and an opportunity for increased centralization of power 642 in the political organization of the Kanuri state. It is against this growing centralization in the hands of the ruling m[illegible] of Bornu that the following account of its structure should be gauged, for it [illegible] always easy to portray change and development while describing how a so[illegible] is organized.

Pre-nineteenth Century Bornu

175 643 At the head of the early Bornu state was the Mai or king. This office was hereditary in the male line, and all men whose fathers had been monarchs were eligible for the succession. The Council of Nobles, and accounts vary as to who these 846 were, chose the new monarch upon the death of the reigning one, although powerful rulers could obviously affect the choice. The royal office carried with it an aura of untouchability, remoteness, and sacredness. People referred to the Mai as "Master" using the term applied by slaves to their owners. People approached the royal cage in which the Mai was seated and prostrated themselves before the bars putting sand on their heads or going through the motions of doing so to indicate the humility and respect they felt in his presence.

175 649 Members of the royal family held titled offices. These included the monarch's own mother, his senior wife, and often a senior female relative, either a sister, half-sister, or more distant female relatives in the male line. The sons and

[1] A fief is a political unit within a state over which a superior has rights of tribute collection and political leadership (not necessarily exclusive rights) given to him by his or his ancestors' relationship to a monarch.

1: Cohen E-4,5 (1956-1965) 1967 MS14 Kanuri MS14

daughters of sovereigns were the princes and princesses of the realm. Princesses were often given in marriage by the king to create alliances between the throne and other states, or nobles, or as rewards to trusted followers. Often, one among the princes was designated Chiroma or heir apparent. However, there was no hard and fast rule that the Chiroma either had the title for life, or that having been graced by the title its holder automatically succeeded to the throne. Although there was no special term for royal granddaughter, a king's grandsons who might become princes, if their fathers obtained the throne, were referred to by a special term.

Attached to the royal household by bonds of strict loyalty and obedience were the king's followers, some of whom lived in the palace, while others lived nearby. These, known as Koguna, together with members of the royal family and their followers provided the basis for the nobility of the state. They were of two main types—slave and free—with slaves being divided into ordinary slaves and eunuchs. The slaves originated from the slave trade or from raids made among pagan groups, or from the sons and daughters of slaves. The free nobility came from deroyalized segments of the royal family as it expanded through time and from descendants of nobles. This nobility was the source of personnel for the bulk of the administrative activities of the state. They served as the monarch's personal bodyguard, as messengers, military commanders, tax collectors, trusted spies, praise singers, slave raiders, consuls, and foreign emissaries. From their ranks came the people who bore the major titles of the state. Some of the titles were derived from Islam; others came from earlier times in Kanem or Bornu history. Although much changed in their nature, a number of these have survived to the present day.

In order to administer the kingdom, titled nobles, including the titled women of the royal family, were given fiefs equivalent to what are today village area units. All such holdings were fragmented and dispersed so that no one noble had control over any large portion of the state. The fief holdings varied in size and number per noble and were a measure of the political success of that particular noble at any point in time. The one exception was the Galidima. The holder of this title maintained a large consolidated set of village areas on the western boundary to protect the east-west trade and guard the western approaches to the capital city. The fief-holders raised militia for the monarch and taxes for themselves and the monarch. They also served as an appeal court system for the local people when they wished adjudication at higher than the local level. Thus people could obtain a royal audience by going through the fief hierarchy. The Kanuri also used the widespread Sudanese practice of dividing the kingdom into quadrants based on the four cardinal directions. Over each quadrant was a highly trusted follower of the king who could oversee the administration of his own quadrant, raise direct royal tax levies, and serve as an alternative form of hierarchy between the people and their ruler. The system functioned in this way as a check on the power of fief-holders, since the king could take fiefs away and redistribute them if there was sufficient reason for doing so. Through their own subordinates these quadrant leaders also administered the nomadic peoples of the kingdom who could not be easily worked into the administration of the fief system based as it was on settled populations. Two of the four leaders were always eunuchs, making for an automatically free power of appointment by the monarch, since these men had no heirs. The other two were always chosen from among the king's closest associates, although there was also a

1: Cohen E-4,5 (1956-1965) 1967 MS14 Kanuri MS14

175 642 631 [634] tendency for these two titles to be passed on down the male line. Even in this latter case, however, the king could always choose those most likely to be totally loyal to his administration from among the heirs, or even disregard the hereditary rule if he wished and give the title to some other person. The four quadrant leaders also had their own fiefs which they used as the basic support for their large household organizations in the capital.

175 648 Vassal groups and territories paid tribute in kind through their leaders to the treasury of the Mai of Bornu. In the heyday of Bornu during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries these vassals included a large number of surrounding peoples in what is now Northern Nigeria, Niger, and Chad. These subordinate groups were organized in two ways. In the first instance a Bornu consul was appointed to reside in the tributary state to help collect annual tributes and administer the government. This was in effect a kind of conquest and occupation used most often in adjacent and nearby territories. The second method was to leave the territory under the control of its own leaders after they had pledged their loyalty and their intention to pay tributes and give military support to Bornu whenever necessary; they were also expected to provide safety and hospitality to expeditions and caravans going to and from Bornu. Some of these vassal states were caught between two great powers. Such a case were the Hausa of northwestern Nigeria. Caught as they were between Songhai to the west and Bornu to the east they, therefore, paid tributes in two directions, always hoping that someday they could be relieved of these burdens by an increase in their own power or a decrease in the power of one or both of their overlords. Indeed Bornu traditions and written records are almost totally concerned with expeditions against reluctant tributaries who were remiss in the payment of their tributes. On the other hand, there are also accounts of tributary states sending to Bornu for help against external enemies and internal revolts; so the relationship could, and often did, work to the advantage of both the conqueror and the conquered.

175 793 692 The religious and legal life of the state was strongly influenced by the specialized religious practitioners who were steeped in the Koran and Islamic jurisprudence. The chief judge and religious leader of early Bornu was given the title of Talba and is referred to in traditions as "second to the king," or the next in authority to the monarch himself. He and his descendants and client followers knew the Arabic script and thus made up a literate group closely associated with political leaders as scribes, legal advisers and religious functionaries. These men sat in on judicial hearings and advised political leaders who adjudicated on the basis of their own knowledge of the law. Besides the Mai, most noble households kept such religious men within their compounds for similar purposes, and as instructors for the children. Under such conditions the religious leaders were also strong supporters of the state and its power structure.

175 651 Little is known of the details of taxation for the early Bornu kingdom although records are much better for the nineteenth century system. Obviously some form of tax was levied on local fiefs by fief-holders as well as by the monarch who also received tributes from vassal states and a major portion of booty from warfare. As we have already noted, it is fairly evident that royal taxation of the Bornu population itself was carried on through the efforts of the monarch's titled followers who held powers of royal taxation privilege in the four quadrants of the state.

1: Cohen E-4,5 (1956-1965) 1967 MS14 Kanuri MS14

Tributes could be quite large; there are records of payments from Kanem to Bornu in the sixteenth century that mention amounts of 1000 head of cattle per year.

Along with taxation and other demands such as annual military service, there was a system of exemption whereby persons or groups were released from their obligations to the state in return for some service—usually prayers and other religious duties. These exemptions, *Mabram*, were made by royal declaration in writing which stipulated that facets of a person's obligation were henceforward considered to be *haram* or forbidden, like the eating of pork. One of the oldest of these, given to the family of Umme Jilma, declares that the family is forever exempt from (a) entertaining the king's men during the dry-season military and tax collection campaigns, (b) from *diya* or blood compensation for injuries inflicted on others by accident, and (c) all forms of tribute and taxes. In time, however, all these exemptions were often honored more in the breach or renegotiated. Thus one sixteenth-century monarch ordered a large group to go to war. These people promptly refused on the basis of a *Mabram* given them by a previous ruler. When the king insisted, the entire group prepared to leave his kingdom. However a compromise was worked out in which they accepted military service and paid practically no taxes. This very same group is mentioned again in the traditions at the beginning of the nineteenth century when Shehu Laminu ruled that their exemptions should pertain only to the leaders of the group, not the entire set of male line descendants of the original holders of this privilege, who by this time had become a very large population.

In its apogee during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, the Bornu kingdom was an expansionist power, and warfare was the state function par excellence. According to traditions and written records, as many as seven or eight military campaigns a year were not uncommon; this meant an expedition might leave Bornu every six or eight weeks during the dry season. With so much militarism the techniques of warfare elaborated accordingly. From at least the sixteenth century onward, Bornu imported muskets, swords, chain mail which were vital and ancient parts of the Saharan trade, although such armaments were also manufactured by Bornu craftsmen as well.

The army itself was organized into regiments, representing a local area or an ethnic group under their own leaders, and they went into battle according to a well laid out military strategy. Campaigns were amost always conducted against walled towns. The shield bearers advanced first; then after it was felt that the poison arrows of the enemy were exhausted, the rest of the army would advance either storming the walls or forcing the town dwellers to come out and fight—whereupon muskets and cavalry were used. Generally speaking open encounters were quite unusual; the Bornu army was large, well disciplined, and well equipped, while the town dwellers were weak in all these respects and would usually try to flee once the siege went against them. Fallen towns were then mercilessly looted and the inhabitants killed or enslaved.

After the campaign and the distribution of booty by the leaders, the army disbanded. Leaders of various territorial ethnic groups swore allegiance to the king and arranged for the next campaign to be held so many days hence. At that time, criers were sent around to local markets stating the date and place of rendezvous for the army. Able bodied men were expected to go or send a representative bear-

1: Cohen E-4,5 (1956-1965) 1967 MS14 Kanuri MS14

ing arms. A wife or female slave often accompanied each man to cook for him. But local townspeople were also expected to supply the army with food when it passed through their territory. However, it was preferred that the army be self-sufficient even to the point of digging their own wells. Discipline obviously posed some problems since the records indicate that at times army morale was low, especially during long, arduous campaigns. However, it picked up very quickly when the prospect of booty was in evidence.

The Nineteenth Century Kingdom

From the beginning of the nineteenth century our records and understanding of Bornu society increased enormously mostly because of the availability of excellent first-hand accounts such as those by Denham and Clapperton in the 1820s, Barth in the 1850s, and Nachtigal in the 1880s. When put together with the oral traditions these accounts fill out a fairly complete picture of Bornu society during the last century.

In the early part of the century Bornu political life was complicated by a fiction. The ancient Sefuwa rulers were still holding court while the Kanembu Shehus were in strict control of the state. This meant that many of the ancient titles lost their meaning because their functions were taken over by members of the Shehu's following. For example, the title of Kaigama, associated traditionally with leadership of the army while on a campaign, was dropped. Instead the Shehu used the title of Kachella, which had previously meant a slave follower who bears arms. Under the Shehus, Kachellas became powerful leaders of armed regiments of their own followers, the size of each Kachella's force being an indicator of his power and rank. At the same time the idea of raising military levies from fiefs was not dropped. Nevertheless the structure had changed, for now the Shehus used Kachellas and their permanent armed following as the military core of the state. Much later in the century, after the collapse of the Sefuwa dynasty, the title of Kaigama or war leader reappeared and was applied to the most powerful of these Kachella. In other words, a number of the old titles of Bornu could not be used in the nineteenth century, since at its beginning these titles were still associated with the old dynasty and its ancient court.

Although titles were varied to some extent, and new ones connected to the names of loyal followers of the Shehu appeared during the double regency, the Shehus organized their governmental administration in somewhat the same manner as that of the earlier Bornu state. The idea of the four quadrants atrophied while the old quadrant leaders remained under the ancient dynasty; and, as in the case of the war leader, these titles were not utilized until the old dynasty had been done away with. They were then absorbed into the general hierarchy of titles of those closely associated with the Shehu. However, the general idea of administering through quadrants was never used again. The Shehu's court met every day to discuss state matters and adjudicate cases when necessary. The Shehu sat on a raised dais and behind him in a semi-circle sat the male members of the royal family who were eligible for the throne. Sitting facing one another in two parallel lines in front of the group were nobles of the realm, slave and free, except for the Galidi-

1: Cohen E-4,5 (1956-1965) 1967 MS14 Kanuri MS14

ma, who when he was in court, sat in front of the throne facing the same way as the Shehu between the two lines. This symbolized his semi-independent status as a holder of a large section of the kingdom rather than a set of fragmented fiefs. Thus the idea of a consolidated set of fief-holdings on the western boundary was maintained. There was a constant threat from the Fulani which made such a move politically expedient.

How much actual power this nineteenth-century court actually had is debatable. Obviously a few favorite advisers who had the ear of the monarch could become very powerful men during the period of their favor. However, who these were seems to have varied throughout the century. Indeed even a place in court might be gained by a very ambitious rural chief, if he appeared often enough and was able to please the monarch by his service and tributes. In the realm of the judiciary some significant changes occurred as well. Before the nineteenth century, as we have already noted, there was a chief judge, the Talba, who was ranked as "the second man" in the state. During the double regency at the beginning of the century, the first Shehu, Laminu, acted as his own chief judge. He was steeped in Koranic learning and is supposed to have had magical powers that enabled him to adjudicate even the most difficult of cases, harshly but with justice. Parenthetically, this power—and not his military acumen and leadership—is considered by the traditions to have been the chief reason why Laminu saved Bornu from the Fulani wars. Later in his rule, sometime in the 1820s, Shehu Laminu appointed two leading religious personages who came from the families of the leading Bornu religious practitioners to the new offices of Liman and Imam. The former took over the major duties of chief legal adviser to the Shehu, while the Imam became the chief religious practitioner in the state. The old Talba stayed with the court of the former dynasty, and after its demise the title became a lesser one in the judicial hierarchy which is where it stands today.

Punishments for misdemeanors were relatively harsh by contempory standards. Adultery on a Muslim holy day could bring 400 lashes to a man or 200 to a woman. It was believed that judges in the capital of Kuka actually set spies upon the populace in search of law breakers. Intentional murder was punishable by death, and the relatives of the dead man carried out the execution by stoning the murderer. Thieves who were repeatedly caught finally had a hand cut off or were tortured by being buried up to the neck, then having their heads buttered or honeyed and exposed above the ground to attract insects. Unpaid debts proven in court resulted in the confiscation of all the debtor's movable property and a fine to the court. The debtor was pinned to the ground by court officials until he consented to confiscation. However, if he obviously had no means at all, the judge dismissed the case with the words, "God send you the means."

All titled officials and even untitled followers of the Shehu could be given or they could inherit, at the pleasure of the Shehu, rights of revenue collection and administration in one or more settlements spread throughout the entire state. These fiefs were granted by the Shehu, nominal owner of all the land in the state. Generally speaking such rights were hereditary in the male line, but the Shehu could diminish or expand the holding of one fief-holder at the expense of another, and a new monarch was expected to patronize his own favorites. Any person holding a fief directly from the monarch was called a chima kura or "the big lord." There

175 634 642 643 421 were two types of differently named fiefs, the one where membership was territorially based, and the other where membership was ethnic or clan based, that is, based on birth into a particular group regardless of its territoriality. The big lord remained in the capital and administered his various fiefs, sometimes ranging up to twenty or more through his representative, the chima gana, or "the junior lords." Each junior lord lived in one of the fiefs of his superior, the fief-holder, or big lord. This junior lord was the highest authority living in the fief and from him one could appeal to the Shehu, being presented by representatives of the junior lord to the big lord living in the capital, and through this latter person to the court of the monarch.

175 634 622 This central administration was linked up to a local one. There was a village head, or bullama, who usually belonged to the male line of the founder of the settlement. However, he was only one among a group of eligibles. If the local junior lord did not like him or the tributes he delivered, then the junior lord could appoint another member of the same line. There are also some records of junior lords shifting the headship to other lineages as well as to persons within the same lineage. As settlements grew in size, sons, clients, and even slaves of the original village head would hive off and form small settlements or satellite communities nearby under the general jurisdiction of the original village head and the local leadership of the founder of the satellite community. These new heads were called mbarma (hamlet heads) as were heads of sub-sections of the original village that had some sort of unity based on occupation or kinship or a combination of both. 175 634 Thus a big lord with the help of his junior lords could have his fief-holdings expand in size, and he tried to help this process along by not being too excessive in his demands on the peasants, and by protecting them from raiders and other forms of outside depredation. A big lord's wealth and ability to supply militia to the monarch depended upon his success as a fief-holder, so that it was in his best interests to see to it that each fief was well governed. People could complain to other nobles, or emigrate out of the fief, and such indications of mismanagement, if they continued, could lead to the granting of fief rights to someone else. This new big lord could then take over part of the original holding, or in extreme cases the entire fief was transferred to another big lord's administration.

175 622 632 634 641 643 A very successful village head—one with a large and flourishing settlement containing many satellite communities—could be rewarded for his increase in power and authority by being brought to the Shehu's court in the capital and given the title of lawan. The Shehu then performed a ceremony in which a turban was placed on the new lawan's head. This meant he was now a member, albeit a local one, of the titled nobility of the state. In this case, he not only paid accession-to-office-gifts to the junior and senior lord which all local headsmen did, but to the Shehu as well. Once having been advanced from bullama to lawan, it was now possible for some of the leading heads of satellite villages to be made into bullama (by the junior lord and the lawan) with their own mbarma or leaders of satellite communties under them in turn. If these inter-related communities developed even further, the lawan might be brought into the capital again and be made officially into an ajia by the Shehu, giving bullama and mbarma under him the opportunity of becoming lawan with bullama and mbarma in turn under them, all under final authority of the ajia and the most senior of the junior lords. By this time the big

1: Cohen E-4,5 (1956-1965) 1967 MS14 Kanuri MS14

By the time the big lord living in the capital would have appointed several representatives to this particular fief because it had grown so big. Such fiefs were the ones most likely to fall prey to sub-division at the death of a king and appointment of a new one. For at this time the incoming monarch had to reward his chief supporters with grants of new fiefs.

As in the pre-nineteenth century the political hierarchy served as an appeal court system, and at the very top of the local fief hierarchy the junior lords shared adjudication with the most senior local leader whatever his rank. Usually these very senior political leaders of the fief had koranic scholars, or mallams, who gave legal advice. Serious cases such as homicide were referred immediately to the capital.

The other variety of fief, that based on birth into a particular group, or *jili* is less well understood. The word "jili" refers to variety or kind. The people speak of this or that jili of soil, or tree, or person. In using it to refer to a person they give his territorial or settlement background, or ethnic group, or his clan grouping if this differs from his territorial classification. Thus a person can have several jili —ethnic, territorial, or clan. Even patrilineal lineage affiliation can be described under this term. Nomadic groups in Bornu were represented as jili in the Shehu's court by a big lord of the jili (chima kura jilibe) ; this man was, in effect, the fief-holder responsible for the nomad group. Sometimes he was a leader of the group itself, and at other times he was a trusted Kanuri follower of the monarch. In both cases the big lord of the jili administered the group through his own representative in the group who was, unlike the territorial grouping, the local leader of a nomad clan, or a sub-tribe. Sometimes entire tribal groupings came under one jurisdiction, and at other times or in other sections of the state the tribe would be broken down into subsections based on clan groupings with one or more clans under a single fief-holder or big lord of the jili.

This double fief system allowed the nineteenth-century Bornu government the organizational means of administering both the settled and nomadic populations of Bornu. It also did something else very important, for it allowed the government effective control over the population even when natural disasters such as outbreaks of disease or sudden invasions sent the people into flight. If a large set of settlements had grown up in one territory from an original one, and this area was then beset by some disaster, which made the people flee in several directions, they were still thought of as a jili or a single variety of persons. They were still organized under their old lords, and their old leaders still retained over them some powers of taxation and demands of loyalty. If the entire kingdom was in an uproar —as it was during the Fulani wars at the beginning of the century with people fleeing in all directions—then old leaders, or former leaders, could muster their scattered followers as jili, and the political integration of the kingdom remained intact and viable until new settlements stabilized locally, and the territorial-based fief system could re-assert itself.

Complicating the system was the settlement of groups with fiefs through permission granted by the big lord in the capital. He could be approached by the leaders of a group of craftsmen, or kinsmen, or people of the same ethnic extraction, who requested of him that they be allowed to settle in one of his fiefs. In this case, the special group was directly under the jurisdiction of the lord through his local administrator, the junior lord, who dealt with their headman. In later generations,

1: Cohen E-4,5 (1956-1965) 1967 MS14 Kanuri MS14

In later generations they often became a separate fief, or in some cases were absorbed into the territorial organization of the original fief. Again, the big lord might also settle some of his slaves in the fief, or he might ask to settle them in someone else's fief, or be asked by some other high ranking person if he would allow slaves to be settled in one of his own fiefs. Slaves delivered the results of their work on the land, and in craftwork directly to their own master whether this was the big lord of the fief or not. If they were in someone else's fief, presents were sent by their master to the senior fief-holder—the big lord—in the capital. It was also possible for the monarch or the big lord to settle holy men, men learned in the Koran, on a fief and such settlements were generally tax free.

There were two main taxes and innumerable smaller ones. Indeed, in the Kanuri language it is possible to denote the meaning of taxation, a tax on something, by simply adding the suffix "ram" to the activity or the object. Of the two main annual taxes, collected after the harvest, one went to the fief-holder and the other to the Shehu. The big lord collected tax on the basis of assessment of local produce by a special tax messenger who went out to the fief and after conferring with local leaders agreed on the tax. All who cooperated in tax collection kept some for themselves, passing surpluses on up the hierarchy to the big lord. In turn the fief-holder always gave gifts to the ruler upon receipt of their own fief-holder tax. Each year the Shehu appointed his own tax messengers from among the nobility and collected a royal tithe from the various fiefs. These men might and might not be fief-holders in their own right, but very often they were not collecting in their own fiefs. Other taxes were annual fees to local headmen, fees for clearing new land, for using new market space, for adjudication, for craftwork, for irrigation (where present), for extending any kind of privilege, etc. The system was essentially the same for the nomad groups, but one related complication should be noted. The people from dispersed localities owed some small taxation privileges to their previous headmen, even though they now lived in new settlements within new fiefs and were required to pay major taxes to their new settlement leaders.

One final point about the pre-colonial political system should be made. To understand such a kingdom it is necessary to keep distinct at all times the concept of a title from that of an office. The Kanuri kingdom had great rosters of noble titles that through time varied in number, numbers of holders per title, and the name of title. Some pre-nineteenth century titles such as the *Fufuma* or lord of the ancient capital city of Birni Ngazargamo dropped out of use. There were a number of men entitled Shettima while there was only one Digma or one Yerima. The titles are honorific, and even personal names which were attached to originally powerful households have become titles during Bornu's long history. Titles embellish a man' political duties, and even provide some opportunities for furthering his ambitions if their past history, or the activities of a title holder, enable him to manipulate the situation successfully for his own advancement. Offices on the other hand are positions in government giving the incumbent rights, duties, and obligations. An office may almost completely coincide with the title, as in the case of the ancient monarch whose title was Mai for probably a thousand years, and Shehu for the last century and a half. Or again offices can vary independently of titles. Thus the title of Digma which was held by a man with many official duties and much power in the mid-nineteenth century had changed by the end of the century, and the man

1: Cohen E-4,5 (1956-1965) 1967 MS14 Kanuri MS14

holding this title had very few of these offices left—they were now the rights of persons holding quite different titles.

The economy of Bornu was a semi-specialized one. Almost everyone grew some crops, except a few cattle nomads, but at the same time during the long dry season people carried on craftwork, trade, and other specialized activities, such as providing medical or barbering services, or entertainment for those who were willing to pay. Everyone had access to new land, over which a person might establish ownership by his act of clearing it. If he used the land for only a few years, and stopped, then the land passed back into bush with no owner. Continued long-term use, especially that involving inheritance, meant that the owner could do with it what he pleased and transfer it to whomever he pleased. In other words the Kanuri had property concepts of usufruct or use-right, but they also had notions of freehold or private property in which land could be transferred by an individual after he had used it for a long time, or it had been passed on to his heirs.

The people raised specialized crops in the kingdom and practiced a myriad of different crafts. Each local craft was organized into a craft guild that helped set production and price standards under a local craft leader who benefited economically from his position and tried to pass it down through the male line. Markets, too, were under headmen and all goods to be traded went to weekly markets to which came thousands of people from the surrounding area.

Trade was accomplished by barter for the most part, although several forms of currency developed, which can be called special purpose or limited purpose money. For various kinds of trade, and within limits, certain objects—a man's robe, iron bars, slaves, horses, cotton rolls, Maria Theresa dollars, and other items—could be used. The trans-Saharan trader came to Bornu for slaves; he therefore demanded payment in slaves, and slaves became a kind of currency for this trade. People from Bornu traded south of Lake Chad for iron bars. These bars could be used to purchase anything in the markets southeast of Bornu where they were the chief export commodity. The same thing is true of cloth in the southern areas of Bornu where it was manufactured and where it was a major export item. Cloth rolls purchased any number of commodities from Bornu but only in that north-south trade. Cowrie shells came very late to Bornu (1820–1850) and never achieved the success as currency that they did elsewhere.

Another and important method of distribution of goods was carried out within the political system itself. Political superiors gave out enormous quantities of cloth, food, horses, and robes on particular holy days or special events such as rites of passage, or wrestling matches. On one occasion a witness in the early part of the century watched the Shehu give away more than a thousand men's robes and an equal number of bullocks and sheep. Although one would expect the leaders to give more than other men, they also served as a model for the population so that the amount of distribution actually carried on in this way must have been very great indeed.

Another important facet of the economy was foreign trade. Although the famous trans-Saharan caravans are supposed to have declined during the nineteenth century, by all accounts they were still of considerable importance for Bornu. Into Bornu came calico, cotton prints, fine silk, sword blades, writing paper, looking glasses, needles, razors, scissors, knives, cheap jewelry, and guns mostly from Eu-

1: Cohen E-4,5 (1956-1965) 1967 MS14 Kanuri MS14

175 439 437 rope. From North African manufacturers came cloaks, shawls, red felt and embroidered hats for men, sashes, trousers, carpets, religious books, spices, perfumes, and later, cowrie shells. From the desert came tobacco, barley, wild rice, dates, salt, natron, camels, and various assorted medicines, especially *drupa,* a herb believed to induce fertility in women. In return Bornu sent back sewn cloth, hides, leatherwork, sandals, feathers, ivory, gum arabic, Korans, kola nuts, and, above all, slaves. Caravans were large, and the trip was long, arduous, and dangerous because of the desert and its marauding inhabitants. However, just how important foreign trade was in the area is difficult to assess. The ordinary man probably used very little of outside manufacture, but at the capital such goods were considered necessities for people having any pretentions to higher status in the kingdom.

The Colonial Change

175 648 Using this description of pre-colonial Bornu it is now possible to discuss the kind of changes that were brought into the area by the inception of British rule at the beginning of the twentieth century. The British came to Bornu in 1901, after it had been occupied for seven years by Rabeh who had been intent on making himself the founder of its third dynasty. The British had not only to bring Bornu 175 177 648 634 under the Northern Nigerian Government but to resuscitate its leaders who had not been in control of the area since 1893. At first they simply left the Shehu to do as he pleased, with the exception of waging war and carrying on the slave trade, which they vigorously put down. However, the idea of fiefs being ruled by lords at the capital seemed grossly inefficient, and they soon ordered that the Shehu choose his best fief-holders and that these be sent out to the locality of their fiefs to govern. Furthermore they decided to consolidate numbers of fiefs into larger units which they now called districts. There followed a tussle between the British and the Kanuri over how many village areas and how many districts there were going to be, the British generally trying to limit the number while the Shehu and his advisers generally tried to increase them. Finally a number around twenty was worked out for the districts and then village areas were incorporated into them. In general these village areas approximate the size and location of former fiefs. However the Kanuri felt that the head of a district was like a titled, local, territorial chief of the 175 177 648 632 634 nineteenth century who has control over a large number of settlements, so he was called *ajia,* which translates today as a district head. Under him were heads of village areas that included a number of satellite settlements—and this village area head was—like the *ajia,* appointed and turbaned by the Shehu. He was therefore called a lawan (village area head) as was the titled head of a settlement with satellites during the nineteenth century. The difference, however, was that now there was no fief-holder or his representative to whom the local headmen were accountable. The district head held his office directly under the Shehu and the village area heads were directly under the district head. Small wards and hamlets were now 622 headed up by bullama and the term for a bullama's subordinate, the mbarma, fell into disuse and has now almost disappeared.

175 177 648 634 The mode of appointing and maintaining these jobs led to problems which were never really solved. The Shehu put up names for the district heads who be-

1: Cohen E-4,5 (1956-1965) 1967 MS14 Kanuri MS14

came a very powerful group of chiefs through whom the kingdom was administered. When these men went to their districts, sometimes they had precolonial ties in these areas as big lords—some of the constituent towns in the district were their former fiefs; sometimes however they were complete strangers to the area. Besides this there was a constant shuffling of different district heads through transfers, dismissals, retirements, and deaths. The various village area heads under each district head were chosen on the basis of investigations conducted by the British colonial officials to find out who among the population had the hereditary right to leadership for a particular local settlement and its satellite communities. Very often there was no tie of previous loyalty between the village area head and the new district head. Previously the problem had been solved by sending out a chima gana or junior lord who represented the fief-holder. He had lived in the fief and created a set of loyal local followers. At first district heads did the same things. They sent out their own representatives—now called chima—to run the village areas in their district for them. This practice was soon discovered by the British and as early as 1910 was declared illegal, although it continued on until well into the 1930s, and there are even some district heads today who admit they use chima to ensure control of their district. In Chapter 6 we will take up this problem again and examine it in more detail within the organization of the district.

The central government of the emirate has undergone a number of significant changes under colonialism. At first the Shehu collected taxes on settled peoples through the district heads and taxes on nomads through two trusted slave nobles. This proved unsatisfactory to the British who very early in the century changed the system so that each district head was responsible for tax collection on both settled and on nomad populations in his district. This weakened the power of the Shehu, but at the same time (*ca.* 1914) the British began enforcing among themselves the idea that they must deal with the Bornu government through the Shehu and his Council. Thus good or bad reports of the district heads or village area heads had to be officially put through the Shehu giving him a great deal of either protective or punitive power over his district and village chiefs.

After 1914 there was an increasing effort to create a working Council for the Shehu with a modern treasury from which local planning could be financed. Starting with only a few members it has grown slowly through the years to function as a cabinet with a Waziri or chief minister at its helm. Each councilor has a portfolio or Native Authority department, such as Education, Works, Agriculture, and so on, and these have central offices in the capital with representatives spread out in district capitals throughout Bornu. The experience in this twentieth-century emirate has produced Kanuri who now take part in regional and national politics so that men from Bornu sit in Kaduna, Lagos, London, and even at the United Nations in New York.

The movement of fief-holders out into the bush to administer districts produced a district capital where the ajia or district head resides. To this capital he brought his urban followers; and to the village as well came the district judge and his retinue. As the Native Authority departments developed, local representatives of the various civil service departments of the emirate government came out to the district capital as well. This makes the district capital a more complex and urbanized center and has forced the effects of such urbanization to spread widely

1: Cohen E-4,5 (1956-1965) 1967 MS14 Kanuri MS14

throughout the emirate. Roads were built connecting the district capitals to Maiduguri, the major city of Bornu and to one another, and district capital markets came to be among the most active because of the increased population in the district capitals not producing their own goods.

In the economic sphere the colonial era sounded a death knell for the Saharan trade. A dribble of caravan trade still exists, but it was the express policy of the British to face Bornu around and turn its trade toward Nigeria and the Nigerian ports. Caravans were heavily taxed, and European trading companies were encouraged to move into Bornu and start circulating cash and cheap import goods. These few large English and French trading companies encouraged the appearance of a corps of Levantine traders who are ubiquitous in West Africa. They take credit from the large companies, giving it out again to large numbers of Africans who buy and sell for them. By the second world war ground-nuts were a well established cash crop, marketed through these companies although controlled by the government. When inflationary boom prices for ground-nuts hit Bornu after the war, the people were ready to take full advantage of it and there was a surge upwards of consumer buying, so that radios, bicycles, and many other industrial commodities became part of local life. On the other hand, judging by the surprise registered in the annual reports of the colonical officials, the government was a little stunned at first to know what to do with its increased revenues. However a host of new improvements began to be an accepted part of life in the public sector, just as new import items became common to the private sector. The most recent of such changes has already been mentioned in Chapter 1. After independence, the digging of deep wells increased the cattle population enormously and has provided a basis for further development in the area. This, then, is the Bornu background. It is a long and eventful one—and the people are proud of it. For an anthropologist, one of the most intriguing questions to ask is "why"—why has Bornu lasted so long in this area? Why has it adapted so well to modern times? It has absorbed Shehu Laminu's destruction of the Sefuwa dynasty, Rabeh's conquest, the colonial overlordship, and national independence in its calm stride. Its leaders and its people are remarkably stable—yet not enslaved by tradition. Indeed they strive to change and develop Bornu and their future is a bright and hopeful one. In the chapters to follow I hope to provide answers to these questions in order that we may ask them again after considering in more detail the quality of life in Bornu.

1: Cohen E-4,5 (1956-1965) 1967 MS14 Kanuri MS14

larly as his representatives. The wakil also makes regular visits to important emirate leaders and tries to maintain a constant check on political developments in the capital and the emirate as a whole. Through this organization and through the giving of gifts and hospitality to visitors and messengers from the capital, as well as cultivating high placed friends, the district head maintains and builds up a communication network through which he obtains a many-sided picture of events in the capital.

District heads are also linked to the capital by their membership in factions that help to make up the political life of the emirate. In pre-colonial times these factions grew out of the allegiance of nobles to the various segments of the royal lineage. This indeed was the reason the succession disputes to the throne could turn into bloody civil wars. These same traditional factions still exist today, but there have been added new ones which involve close alliances between very powerful men in the emirate government. These reflect the weakened authority of the Shehu, and the increase in power and authority of the Native Authority officials in the top positions of the emirate government. District heads linked to more powerful factions receive better information about the course of emirate politics and more protection when they need it than those related to weak ones. Thus one district head might be linked to a member of the royal family who has no official position in the Native Authority and who has little hope of gaining the throne; another might be closely linked to the Waziri or chairman of the Bornu Native Authority Council. The latter district head, because of his factional membership, is in a much stronger position in the emirate political organization as a whole than is the former. These links to the center both official and unofficial must be carefully developed and maintained by a district head. This is especially true when it is realized that a district head like any other member of the Bornu political system operates within two cultural orientations—one western and the other traditional Kanuri. The district head should give gifts to subordinates, to his faction leaders, and to many other powerful people in the state. From a western point of view these can be seen as bribes, while from a Kanuri vantage point they may be looked upon as obligatory and legitimate recognition by the district head of the power and protection that can be wielded by his superiors in the central government of the emirate. Since such expenses are not provided for in the district head's official salary, the means by which he obtains the wealth to make such gifts often involves breaking rules according to strict western civil service standards, although again such activities might be considered legitimate by local tradition.

The central focus of this behavior revolves around tax collection. The district head is seen in western terms to be an agent of government who collects taxes and is paid a salary for this and other services. However, he needs to maintain a large following who are not provided for by government if he is going to collect nomad cattle taxes. These men must ride out over the entire district—often several thousand square miles—to collect the tax. To keep these men as his tax collectors he needs much more revenue than his own salary. If he does not collect the tax, or enough taxes, he will be punished by dismissal or transfer to a smaller less prestigious district. He has very little choice; in order to keep his own organization going and to maintain friendly contact at the center by gift-giving, he must take some of the district's tax revenue for himself. This makes him vulnerable at all times; to comply with some demands which are deemed important he must break others

1: Cohen E-4,5 (1956-1965) 1967 MS14 Kanuri MS14

social and moral life of the community. It is prophesied that morality and family life as it is now known could be destroyed if opposition parties ever came to power. Finally, it is always pointed out that opposition parties represent the Southern Nigerians and that a vote for such a group is a vote against Islam, the true religion, and a vote for paganism covered by a thin cloak of Christianity.

During the 1950s when there was an active local opposition party in Bornu under a Kanuri leader, attitudes to the opposition were more clearly seen. The British colonial officials dealt mostly with senior Kanuri members of the Native Authority. Both the British and these Kanuri leaders had an abhorrence of disorder, riots, or activities that could lead to such disturbances. It was thought that allowing Southern Nigerians to organize branches of their own party locally was one thing but having a Kanuri opposition party was quite another. Events proved them correct, for in 1958 riots broke out in Maiduguri between supporters of the N.P.C. and the Bornu Youth League. The ins and outs of these riots need not concern us here, but from that time on the B.Y.L. was crushed. Many of its local leaders fled to other parts of Nigeria or to neighboring Chad to reappear several years later and eventually to become loyal N.P.C. supporters. Today although other Nigerian parties are represented in Bornu, their supporters and local organizers are all non-Kanuri. Thus the emirate government is linked to Nigerian party politics through a one-party organization which represents the traditional authority system of the emirate.

The party and its place as a dominant element in Nigerian politics means that Kanuri leaders have open to them regional and federal appointments. There are Kanuri in the federal cabinet and in the various federal ministries. Up until January 1966, the political head of the N.P.C. and the Premier of the northern region was the Sarduana of Sokoto, and the Governor was Sir Kashim Ibrahim, the former Waziri of Bornu.[1] The old nineteenth century balance of power in this region between the empires of Bornu and Sokoto still remain, then, and both must be represented in the leading positions of this, the largest region of Nigeria.

In summary, Kanuri political organization is basically structured along the lines set up by the colonial era which were built onto those of pre-colonial times. As the emirate has developed, need for more modern political structures these have appeared and are continuing to appear as the society changes towards more modernization and the accumulation of social and economic development. Within this structure modes of behavior are still largely traditional as are the values and political ideology that give the present system its immediate and long range goals. Whether or not modernism and its values will eventually produce a clash with tradition or whether the change will continue to be as smooth and incremental as it has in the past is one of the key questions for the future.

[1] As this is being written the politics of Nigeria, and in all probability its constitutional make-up, are being changed by the effects of the military take-over of the federal government which occurred in January, 1966.

132 nightly, often approaching freezing. This is also the time of the harmattan, a strong wind bearing down from the desert, carrying with it silt and fine white sand. The sand stings the face and chaps the lips. It penetrates all cracks and openings, covering everything with fine powder. The mornings are cold but the noon sun is always strong and brilliant.

This period is followed by the long hot season. For months the temperature ranges between ninety and one hundred degrees F., often soaring to one hundred and ten degrees. Clouds never appear and the glaring sun is reflected and intensified by the shimmering sand. Beneath the unrelenting sun the countryside withers and turns brown.

B. History

175 [101] The name 'Bornu' refers to the ancient empire of Bornu which existed here for more than a thousand years. The Kanuri people, builders of the empire of Bornu, moved into the plain of Bornu from the still more arid reaches north and east of Lake Chad. According to the historical sources, the Sefawa, a part of the Zaghawa tribe, allied themselves with the Teda in the neighborhood of Kawar at about 850 A.D. and proceeded to the southwest, organizing the early kingdom of Kanem, with its capital, Birni Njimi, near the northeastern edge of Lake Chad. Bornu was then the most southerly province. In 1389 the Sef dynasty, as it had then become, was expelled from Kanem and moved to Bornu. From that time onward Bornu became the center

175 of the empire. In the latter part of the fifteenth century (ca. 1470) the empire was consolidated and the city of Birni Ngazargamu was founded on the River Yobe. It remained the capital of the empire of Bornu for 350 years. In 1507 the former capital of Birni Njimi was recaptured and Kanem became a province of [172] Bornu. The site of Birni Ngazargamu is twenty-five miles from the present town of Geidam, and its extensive ruins can be seen today.

During the end of the sixteenth century and the beginning of the seventeenth century, the empire reached its zenith. Its boundaries stretched to Fezzan in the north, beyond Kawar and Tibesti, to the Nile in an easterly direction, and to Dikwa and 175 the districts south of Lake Chad. Many minor states paid 177 [648] tribute to Bornu. At that time Bornu was in close contact with [487] both Egypt and Tripoli. Controlling the southern terminus of the shortest trans-Saharan caravan route, which ran from Tripoli through the Fezzan and the oasis of Bilma to Lake Chad and Birni Ngazargamu, the empire of Bornu was in regular contact with the [411] Mediterranean area in earliest times. Guns were introduced into Bornu from Tripoli at the end of the sixteenth century [179] and became a factor in the expansion of the empire. Via these established trade contacts, Islam came to Bornu in the eleventh [183] century. With the coming of Islam came also the tradition of study and learning which has persisted as a part of Kanuri culture.

175 The institution of slavery had always been a part of this
567
[439]

2:Rosman E-5 (1956-1957) 1966 MSI4 Kanuri MSI4

175 547 839 complex of empire since slaves, along with gold, ivory, and ostrich feathers, had been traded for centuries across the Sahara and fed into Mediterranean markets. Slaves were obtained by raiding the pagan peoples who inhabited the upland areas to the south and southeast of Bornu.

175 636 Throughout this time the Hausa people, immediately to the west of the Kanuri, were under the suzerainty of the empire of Bornu. Though the Hausa are much more numerous than the Kanuri, their level of political development had not advanced beyond city-states, which were under the control of the unified and 175 167 powerful Bornu empire. The gradual entry of the Fulani into the area eventually led to the downfall of the domination of Bornu over the Hausa states. The Fulani are a nomadic cattle people deriving from the Atlantic coast area to the distant west. By the early part of the nineteenth century, drifting continuously to the east, they had become numerous in Hausa 175 721 territory. In 1804 the Fulani, under Usuman dan Fodio, rose up in holy war and gained control over the Hausa city states. They succeeded in sacking and destroying Birni Ngazargamu, and were finally repelled when the Kanuri rulers obtained assistance from the Kanembu to the north.

175 439 The inability of the Bornu empire to resist Fulani attacks was an indication of its decline and decay, and this in turn was the result of a much larger historical process: the decline in importance of the western Sudan and the development of the coastal areas of West Africa. Whereas the Sudanese states had

175 439 formerly been in control of the great trans-Saharan trade routes which brought the products of Negro Africa into the European world, the European nations had established direct trading relations with the coastal peoples by the beginning of the sixteenth century and the importance of the trans-Saharan trade began to dwindle. As trade with the north declined in importance, the Sudanese empires founded on this trade were no longer able to maintain themselves.

175 The empire of Bornu, however, continued to exist though much smaller in size. A new capital, Kukawa, was built near [643] the shores of Lake Chad. The ancient Sef dynasty, whose 'Mais' (kings) had ruled since the beginning of the empire, was replaced by the family of El Kanemi, the Kanembu leader who had [354] been instrumental in driving out the Fulani. The title of [562] Shehu (Sheikh) replaced that of Mai. Within Bornu proper a [423] feudal system existed. Titled nobility were given huge tracts of land by the Shehu. Though these lords lived in Kukawa, the capital, they collected taxes and otherwise administered their lands.

175 648 The weakened empire was unable to resist a final attack, this time from the east. Rabeh, leader of a renegade army from the Sudan which had failed in an attempted revolt there, overran Bornu in 1893. He, in turn, was killed by the French in 175 648 1900. In 1902 British forces entered Bornu, and reestablished the line of the Shehus which had been broken by Rabeh's occupation. The British then ruled in Bornu through the considerably altered organization of the former empire. The Shehu of Bornu,

175 The Shehu of Bornu,
648 however, remains as the religious and political head of the
643 Kanuri people.

C. The Ethnographic Distribution of Peoples in the Area.

197 1. Linguistic Classification.

The Kanuri language, according to Greenberg's classification, is part of the Central Saharan language family, one of the twelve genetically distinct language families which he has isolated in Africa. The Central Saharan language family includes Kanuri, Teda, Dazza, Zaghawa, Baele, Bideyat and Berti, all in contiguous distribution. The Kanuri are the southwesternmost extension of this language family. They are almost completely surrounded by people speaking languages of the Chad family. These include: Hausa, Buduma, Kotoko, Mandara, Marghi, and Bolewa. In this solid block of Chad-speaking peoples the Kanuri form a peninsula of Central Saharan speakers, related to
[174] languages far to the northeast. This is in agreement with the historical sources which trace the movement of the Kanuri into Bornu from the area northeast of Lake Chad.

2. The Major Groups.

648 The historical factors which led to the development of the
177 empire of Bornu and determined its relations to neighboring peoples and states are reflected in the cultural distribution of
[171] peoples in the area today. The Kanuri are one of the many Mos-
[179] lem peoples stretching in a wide belt across the Western Sudan.

177 563 101 are a more distinct group. The Bolewa are one of a number of small tribes in the area centering around the towns of Fika and Potiskum. However, while the Bolewa are a Moslem people, the Kerekere, Ngizim, and Ngamo, who all live in the same area, are pagans. Since this region was under the direct control of the empire of Bornu, the Moslem Bolewa are oriented towards Bornu and the Kanuri. The upper classes of the Bolewa speak Kanuri. The Kerekere, Ngizim and Ngamo show little sign of Kanuri influence.

Lastly, the Bede of Gashua are a group completely surrounded by Kanuri. The town of Gashua lies eighty-three miles west of Geidam, between the Kanuri towns of Nguru and Geidam, both of which are larger than Gashua. The Bede have retained their own language, though almost all Bede speak Kanuri as well. They are a part-Moslem people, acculturated to the dominant Kanuri who envelop their small area.

177 563 [715] [636] The various peoples mentioned above are culturally distinct groups living along the borders of the area of the Kanuri and in constant contact with Kanuri culture. During the time of the empire of Bornu they were all to some extent subject peoples of the Kanuri. As a result they have become acculturated to the Kanuri, but have retained their identity as separate groups. This process is different from that of groups of people who inhabited the plains of Bornu at the time of the coming of the Kanuri and were subjugated and absorbed by the Kanuri. They have not become completely submerged, for they may still exist

648 the actual administrative power. The twenty-one District Heads
648 in Bornu Emirate were appointed by the Shehu, as was the Waziri,
643
634 and the members of the Shehu's council. Although these appointments formally need not be approved by the British administration, in practice their approval was necessary.

634 The system of District Heads replaced the feudal absentee
• 175
631 landlords who controlled Bornu in the latter half of the nine-
178 teenth century. Many peasants still refer to their District
[651] Head as chima, the name for the feudal lord of former times, since one of the main functions of the District Head is the
[829] collection of taxes. Although many commoners continue to view the system today much as their ancestors looked upon the political system during the days of the Bornu Empire, radical changes
[642] had been brought about. Under the empire actions and decisions of the feudal lords were subject only to the disapproval of the
[648] Shehu, the absolute ruler. Today a still larger political unit, the government of Nigeria, maintains a legal system which protects all citizens though they may not be aware of it. A Kanuri could appeal out of his own political system, and seek the protection of a British District Officer against the ruling of his own Village Head or District Head. Obviously such a move might have serious repercussions and not many individuals decided to take the step. Nevertheless, the alternative existed.

692 In accordance with the British practice of ruling through
779 native institutions where possible, the formal legal system of Northern Nigeria continued to be Islamic law, more precisely

178 788 though there have always been people who walked or rode donkeys. 556 441 [509] The modern pilgrimage is usually made by truck, or by chartered plane from Maiduguri to Mecca. A wealthy man, and this usually means someone engaged in trade, can travel to Mecca and back by plane for the sum of 120 pounds sterling.

4. The Social System.

177 178 Many of the political and economic changes brought about by the increasing integration of Kanuri culture within the greater orbit of Western culture have resulted in further internal changes within Kanuri life. These are clearly manifested in the shifting patterns of the social structure of modern Kanuri 175 565 society. At the time of the empire, before European contact, the aristocracy was a clearly defined social class whose membership exercised political power, controlled available sources of wealth, and enjoyed the prestige deriving from nobility of [554] family. These characteristics were unified and symbolized in a title conferred upon a man by the Shehu and inherited in a gen- 565 178 eral sense, along with wealth and political office. Many of these wealthy and powerful aristocratic families continue to exist today, and most of the District Heads and other important political figures are members of such families.

Although the controlling leadership of Kanuri society today can still be traced directly to the aristocracy of former times and still bears many of its characteristics, the system is no longer as stable and as self-perpetuating as it formerly

161 has been declining in the present century. The Kanuri Empire
[175] had suffered final defeat at the hands of Rabeh's invading forces in 1890, and the countryside had been ravaged in the
[164] succeeding decade. Venereal disease appears to have spread
[84Z] widely throughout the population leaving in its wake a marked decline in fertility and a resultant decrease in numbers of
311 the Kanuri population. There is consequently little pressure
[137] for land to farm. Large stretches of brush country are unworked, and the denser sections, along old water-courses, are
136 veritable jungles of brush and thorn. Larger wild-life have long since disappeared from Bornu, forced out by many centuries of human occupation, but some of the denser section of thicket might well support them today. A small herd of elephants is reported around Gumsa, in Geidam District, and of course elephants can be found in the extensive marshes along Lake Chad, but by and large the only game one sees are gazelle, monkeys, and birds, including occasional ostriches.

361 The Kanuri are a sedentary, agricultural people, who live in villages and towns. The fields which they farm encircle their villages. They are never found living in dispersed home-
369 steads. A basic division exists between Kanuri village life and Kanuri life in the towns and cities. This division corresponds to the classic distinctions between folk and urban polar extremes. Urban life was present in pre-contact Kanuri culture
[162] and consequently is well integrated into Kanuri culture. In fact, the Kanuri cities of the eighteenth century were unques-

External
443 trade, involving groundnuts, hides and skins, and European
438 manufactured goods is not effected in the market-place. Every
366
[439] sizeable town has a weekly market day. Large towns have daily markets as well. Adjacent towns have staggered market days, forming loose market rings which link a number of towns. Itinerant middlemen can travel from one market town to the next with their goods, and a town is frequently known by the name of its market day, and will be referred to as "Saturday." Peo-
[484]
[369] ple from small surrounding villages without markets will come into town on a market day from as far away as ten miles on foot, and from still further if they are fortunate enough to own a donkey or a horse.

B. Larger Features of the Political Organization.

1. The Structure of the Empire in Pre-Contact Times.

• 175
643 The dynasty of the Sefs came to an end in 1846, when the last Mai or king of Bornu, Mai Ibrahim, along with his son Ali Dalatumi, was killed. In their place ruled the son of Mohammad el Amin el Kanemi, the first of the Shehus, and the founder
[178] of the dynasty which today "rules" Bornu. Though a dynasty which had ruled Bornu for a thousand years had come to an end, the structure of the empire seems to have remained essentially the same.

[192] Shehu Omar, the son of el Kanemi, took the title of Shehu from the Arabic title, Sheikh. His father had been a Kanembu, from Kanem which lies north and east of Bornu. El Kanemi brought

El Kanemi brought
175 with him a group of Kanembu and Shuwa nobles, who formed the
643
565 nucleus, along with their men, of the army which drove back
177 the Fulani invaders of Bornu. These noble Kanembu families remained in Bornu and adopted Kanuri culture. El Kanemi built the new capital of Bornu at Kukawa, and his son Shehu Omar
175 ruled from Kukawa. The empire of Bornu had declined greatly
178 from its zenith in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth
565 centuries, and the Fulani attacks were both a sign of its weakness and an additional factor in furthering the decline. In form, however, the empire remained much the same. Many of the old families who had been aristocrats under the Mais retained
175 their titles, their lands and their position. The new noble
177 Kanembu and Shuwa families that had followed el Kanemi were
565 given Kanuri titles and entered the social system as Kanuri aristocracy. In time, they accepted Kanuri culture, according to accepted procedures of assimilation which are well understood by the Kanuri and apply to conquerors and conquered alike, to slaves and to freemen.

175 The Shehu and his court ruled in Kukawa. Members of the
644
565 royal family were given large tracts of land, including many
631 villages, and from their lands they took money for taxes paid
423 to the central government and for their own uses. In like fash-
[651] ion, the nobility, who were the commanders of army regiments and holders of high titles, had their lands and villages. These were the chimas. Even religious leaders, such as the Imam, were
175 given land. The nobles who were chimas, continued to live in
565
631

175 Kukawa while their slaves and subordinates administered their
565 lands and collected taxes. Slaves of the Shehu could them-
631 selves be chimas, and in fact some of the highest titles--
[567] those of Kaigama (a general of the army), and Mastrema (a
[554] eunuch) were reserved for slaves of the Shehu.

175 The "knights" of the Shehu were titled lords, who served
631 as his kabuna. Each lord also had his own kabuna, who vowed
565 allegiance directly to him. The kabuna of the lord actually
567 administered his lands while he lived in the capital. Many of
them were his slaves, but just as slaves of the Shehu could
themselves be powerful nobles, so too slaves of a lord who
were his kabuna were powerful individuals in the villages under
[632] the jurisdiction of their lord. From his kabuna the lord se-
[627] lected the most trustworthy and rewarded them by having them
appointed town heads (Lowan), or to a lesser extent village
heads (Bulama). The Lowan of a town was directly involved in
administering his town, in adjudicating disputes through arbi-
tration and in collecting the property tax (haraji).

634 It was said that the chima was almost the absolute author-
173 ity in his lands. If he saw a horse that he wished to have or
642 a woman whom he admired, he could have them simply by indicat-
ing that he wanted to possess them. No man would refuse him
[643] directly. However, if reports came to the Shehu that a chima
was acting irresponsibly the Shehu could reprimand the man,
175 and could even remove his title from him. Any man could ap-
643 peal directly to the Shehu for justice. The power of the Shehu
642

175 643 642 was indeed absolute. Only the advice of his Imam or of his Koranic Malams might sway or alter his decisions, but this was no more than advice. It might be pointed out to him that a particular course of action was counter to the writings of the Koran, and he might ignore the advice at his peril, but the ultimate decision was his.

2. The Political Organization of the Empire in the Twentieth Century.

175 648 642 178 In 1893 the empire of Bornu suffered what seemed to be the final blow. An army under the leadership of Rabeh, a follower and foster son of Zubeir Pasha of the Sudan, defeated the army of the Shehu of Bornu, overran the empire, and for seven years subjected it to their plunder. In 1900 the French captured and killed Rabeh. Two years later the British entered Bornu. Their first act was to restore the line of the Shehus to the throne. Thus, the empire of Bornu was perpetuated by the colonial powers, though itself unable to resist attack successfully. Restoration by the British brought about a continuation and revival of the old political organization which persists into the present. Through this structure, with some additions and modifications, the British ruled for 58 years in Bornu.

175 648 634 178 From the point of view of the Kanuri villager, the political system under the British was hardly different from that under which his father had lived before the coming of Rabeh. The British did away with the chimas, replacing them with District

175 Heads or Ajias. The only important difference between the two,
178
648 from the point of view of the Kanuri farmer, is that the Ajia
634 lived in the capital of his District, while the chima lived in
[642] Kukawa. There were, in fact, great differences between the two, because the British Resident ultimately controlled all policy decisions at the upper levels. But the Kanuri villager knew little of this. It is striking to note how many of the District Heads in 1956-1957 were the heads of the same noble families from which the chimas of the last century were chosen. The British, with or without knowing it, had kept the aristocratic families in positions of political power, at the same time preserving the old political structure of the empire.

175 The Ajias, in their turn, have kept their own kabuna to
634 help them in administering their districts. From their kabuna
632 they have selected the most trusted to serve as Lowans. Since many of the Ajias came from the nobility, they had many slaves whom they inherited from their fathers. These were frequently their most trusted kabuna, though not all kabuna are slaves. Many of the Ajias are slaves of the Shehu, and many of the Lowans are slaves of the Ajias. Ajia and Lowan alike settle disputes, and collect taxes, their two most important functions.

[642]
[651]

C. Religion

779 The Kanuri are Moslems. Islam entered Bornu in the elev-
[175] enth century, and since that time has spread throughout the entire Kanuri population. Unlike the Hausa, where a large part

614 178 is Shetima Mastafa, the Ajia of Kukawa. The head of the Kanembu Tomagari, is Alhaji Mai Manga of N'Guigmi, in Niger, not in [643] [643] Nigeria. When Alhaji Mai Manga was appointed chief of his region by the French authorities the Shehu of Bornu, in British Nigeria, sent him a gown (kulugu) as his mark of office. It was necessary for him to obtain the traditional approval of the [563] Shehu before he could be accepted by the populace. The heads of Shuwa and Fulani jilis are given kulugus by the Shehu, which indicates the political nature of the jili, or sib. However, the heads of the Kanuri jilis today have no functions whatsoever. People come to pay them respect (noggna) as a result of their position, but this is all that remains attached to the position.

F. The System of Social Stratification.

175 565 The old Kanuri system of social stratification recognized four distinct social classes. These were royalty (ngalwo), aristocracy (kantuoma), commoners (talaka), and slaves (kalya). One can distinguish four separate variables, which, when taken together, determine the social importance of any category of individuals. These are: power, wealth, respect, and free-birth; among the Kanuri they can serve as criteria for determining the rank of a social class, or of a single individual within a class.

121 61 66 565 Power is a quality which can be used to define a social relationship, and which derives from the political structure

565
534
554
577
792
563

so results in loss of esteem.[1] A pious and god-fearing man, among the Kanuri, will have earned the respect of his neighbors so long as he continues to behave in that fashion. On the other hand, a Malam of the Koran is respected because he belongs to a category of individuals which has high prestige in Kanuri society. Knowing that he is a Malam, people will treat him with respect. Should he not behave as Malams typically behave, he would suffer a loss of esteem. In this case, piety and study of the Koran are important values in Kanuri society, so that individuals who stress those values in their own behavior are accorded prestige.

567
565
554
829

The fourth and final variable which acts as a determinant in the system of social stratification is whether a man has been born a free-man (kambe) or a slave (kalya). This defines his specific relationship to another man, his master, should he have been born a slave, but it has no effect on the three previous variables discussed above. It does not follow that a man born a slave necessarily ranks low in power, wealth or prestige. There is a certain amount of independence in the operation of each of the four variables.

1. Royalty and Aristocracy.

175
565
554

In pre-contact times social stratification was rigid, and had institutional support and recognition in two customs: the

---

1. usage here is according to Ralph Linton, The Cultural Background of Personality, (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc., 1945), pp. 73-74.

175 granting of titles by the Shehu (and before him by the Mais),
565 and the regular practice of slavery.
554

A title (kagala) which the Shehu bestowed on a man was both a recognition, and a source of his social position, for the title embodied power, wealth and prestige. Power lay in the political office which accompanied the title; wealth lay in the access to land, labor and taxes which followed from title and office; prestige lay in the recognition by all of the symbolic meaning of the title. Aristocracy and slaves were given titles, but talaka, commoners, never were granted titles in former times.

565 One set of titles is held by royalty. The title of Shehu
554 itself is conferred by a council (modules) according to strict
644 rules of succession, after a Shehu dies. Other titles belong
[643] to members of the Shehu's family. These are unlike most titles in that they are titles ascribed by virtue of royal kinship and are not conferred to the individual by the Shehu. They include:

Maina - a prince, the son of a Shehu; also brothers of the present Shehu whose father was himself Shehu.

Mairam - (also called Nana) - the daughter of a Shehu.

Maidugu - the grandchild of a Shehu.

Some royal titles are granted by the Shehu to royalty. These are:

Maira - mother of the Shehu. If the Shehu's own mother is dead, another woman is given the title Maira, and functions as the Shehu's 'mother'. The title can be given to someone not of the Shehu's own family, should he wish to do so.

CONTINUED
ON
NEXT FICHE

554 Mogorom - younger sister of the Shehu. A conferred title
565 which can be given to anyone. If the Shehu does
644 not like his younger sister, he can give the title to whomever he wishes.

Dogoma - also the younger sister of the Shehu, but a lesser title than that of Mogorom.

Gumsu - usually head wife of the Shehu, but the title can instead be given, at the Shehu's pleasure, to another wife.

Karijroma - head of the Shehu's chirs.

175 Next let us turn to consider the Chimas, who had been men-
423 tioned earlier. Since all land was the Shehu's land, he had
601 the power to give or withdraw the fiefs which were granted to
565 chimas. By custom, certain lands were reserved for the Imam.
554 In addition, the Maira, Gumsu, and Mogorom also had their own
644 fiefs. The remaining lands were largely in the hands of the Shehu's kabuna; his knights and the commanders of his troops.

175 The Shehu's kabuna were divided into those who were free (kambe)
565 and those who were slave (kalya). A number of titles which the
554 Shehu granted were reserved for slaves. Among the slave titles,
567 some were titles of kabuna, and others were not. Both of these, kabuna slaves and non-kabuna slaves, could be chimas. The four most important chimas held the following titles: Kaigama (a slave, and the head of all slave kabuna), Mastrema (a slave, but not a kabuna), Yuroma (a slave, but not a kabuna), Yerima (a freeman and a kabuna).

175 The most important Kanuri titles, all those mentioned above,
554
565

175 554 565 are individual titles which can be held by only one man at a time. There can be only one Kaigama, one Mastrema, and one Yerima at any given time. A man's son did not invariably inherit his father's title at his father's death. The title was conferred by the Shehu, customarily to the son of the previous title holder. If there were several sons, the one whom the Shehu judged most worthy was given the title; and if a title-holder had no sons, or no sons worthy of holding a title, the title might be given to anyone, though it was almost always given to someone of the household of the title-holder. There are several interesting cases of high titles given to talaka who were members of a household (the present holder of the title Talba is a slave who was given the title because there were no sons of the previous Talba; a horse boy inherited the title of Kaigama in the past; the Malam to the family, and a member of the household, inherited the title of Yirima). A talaka who was considered worthy, and was a member of a household whose head held a title might inherit that title; a common talaka without appropriate household affiliations could never hope to receive a title in former times.

The title was the mark of nobility in Kanuri society, and the embodiment of the several dimensions which, when taken together determined social importance. [634] The title was linked to the system of feudal chimas who paid allegiance to the Shehu and effectively governed the land. [642] The chimas had power, subject only to review by the Shehu himself, over the people in

175 554 565 [642] [556] [651] their lands; they had wealth because of their rights to tax the populace, as well as their access to large tracts of farm land worked by the populace for the benefit of their chima, and to labor in the form of tax payment to the chima. The chimas had prestige which rested in the noble title which they bore. But, 175 554 565 567 interestingly enough, it was not necessary to be free-born in order to be a chima, or in order to receive a title. A slave of the Shehu could himself occupy a position of enormous power as a titled chima, could be extremely wealthy, and would be respected as well as feared by the talaka, the free-born populace. 554 565 592 Lastly, it should be borne in mind that these attributes which determine social position are shared by an entire household, and not solely by one individual. It is true that only one man is granted a title, but he is the head of a large household. The more important the man, and the greater his title, the larger will be his household, including: number of wives, slaves, concubines, children given to him, and tata njima. These all share to an extent in the increased power and wealth of the titled household head. As his own position rises, his slaves and tata njima increasingly receive greater power and responsibility. They become his kabuna, collect taxes for him, administer the lands and eventually hope to be appointed Lowans, by which time they themselves will have large and important households.

2. Slaves.

565 Royalty, by virtue of their close kinship with the Shehu,
354 fall into a distinct category in Kanuri society. For some, the kinship terminology takes the form of a title (Maina = prince), others are granted royal titles by the Shehu (Gumsu). Nobility represent a second category, composed of those titled freemen who trace no relationship to the Shehu. Here the titles are all conferred by the Shehu to a member of a household, who becomes the head of that household upon receiving the title.
567 Since the Kanuri recognize a category of slaves, they should be
565 distinguished as a separate segment of the population. However, they do not form the bottom-most stratum of Kanuri society, as might be supposed. On the contrary, just as freemen are stratified into nobility and commoners, so too can slaves be considered as a vertical segment of Kanuri society, falling into numerous stratified layers within the category called "slave."

567 The principles governing slavery in Kanuri society must now be considered so that the above view of the position of the slave can be properly understood. A Moslem may not enslave another Moslem, so that slaves can be taken only from pagan
• 175 peoples. In former times slaves were captured by raiding parties
567 who drove into pagan territory, sacked and burned villages, and
721 brought back captives who became slaves of Kanuri masters, either of the Shehu himself, or of officers of the army. Slaves were most frequently taken by the Kanuri from among the Marghi, to the south; from the tribes of the Gwoza hills; from the neigh-

175 borhood of the Shari river, south and east of Bornu; and the
567 lands east of the Shari. Of course, only pagan areas were
[72] raided.

Pagan peoples, on being captured in slave raids, remained with their Kanuri masters. As noted above, captured slaves belonged to either the Shehu (or the Mai in olden times), or to officers of the army, who invariably were titled nobles, and kabuna of the Shehu. However, Kabuna of the Shehu might be freemen or might themselves be slaves of the Shehu. In either case they could own slaves, so that it was possible for a slave to have slaves himself. In fact, a slave of the Shehu might own a slave, who in turn had a slave. In a legal sense, the owner of the first slave owned all the others, so that the Shehu owned all slaves of his slaves.

Although a Moslem may not enslave another Moslem, it is proper for a Moslem to own another Moslem as slave. Pagan slaves taken by Kanuri masters learned Kanuri culture, and their children grew up speaking only the Kanuri language and considered themselves Kanuri. They also became Moslems, but continued to remain slaves. This is in order, since one may not capture another Moslem, but one is not obliged to free a slave who converts to Islam. The slave of course has no jili since his ancestors were originally pagan (kardi).

567 The hierarchy with respect to slaves is determined by sev-
554 eral factors. The first is whether the individual, and his descendants, are slaves of the Shehu or the slaves of a noble

175 567 554 (in this case a titled free-born man and a titled slave of the Shehu's are identical). Let us first consider the case of a slave of the Shehu. Slaves of the Shehu fall into two general categories: kabuna and sugurumma. The kabuna are the knights and commanders of army units. The general of the army, and a slave kabuna, held the title of Kaigama, one of the highest Kanuri titles. The Kaigama was one of the four greatest chimas, ruling one of the largest fiefs. He had very many slaves of his own. [illegible]er the Kaigama were the Kazellas, high military officers who also were slaves. These were the slave Kabuna, 175 567 644 839 titled and themselves chimas. The sugurumma were an entirely different category. They were personal slaves, in charge of the household of the Shehu. It was a common practice in raiding for slaves, to capture large numbers of young boys as slaves of [304] the Shehu. These were then castrated; penis and testicles were removed entirely. Of a group of fifty or so, aged five or six, who were subjected to castration, it was said that perhaps five or six might survive the operation. These eunuchs (adim, an Arabic term) served as personal servants of the Shehu and lived in his household. The sugurumma is literally the keeper of the key, an indication of his position of trust within the Shehu's 175 567 household. Several titles are reserved for adims. These are:

644 839 554 Yuroma - the most important of the adims, and one of the four greatest chimas. On his death his title goes to the adim presently holding the title of:

Mastrema - the second most important title held by an adim, and another of the four greatest chimas. He is succeeded by the holder of the title:

175 567 644 554 839

Shetima Abu Karim - whose title is below the other two, but who is personally closest to the Shehu. He is succeeded by the

Mala Agadi. All other adim are called abagana. Today, of course, the adim titles are vacant, the last important adim being Mastrema Musa who died in 1921. He is remembered as a fat man, with a high voice and an evil disposition. He was for a time the Ajia of Borsari district, but was dismissed. One adim, Abagana Modu Manga, still survived and lived in Maiduguri in 1956. Not all of the sugurumma were eunuchs. The title Digma is that of a slave sugurumma who was not a eunuch, and that title survives today, held by the present Ajia of Magumeri district.

175 567 554

Slaves of the Shehu fall therefore into two vertical categories, kabuna and sugurumma, and crowning each of these categories were titled slaves who were among the most powerful individuals in the land, and account for three of the four most important chimas. However, the bulk of the Shehu's slaves never rose to positions of great power; they served in a variety of lesser capacities, performing tasks of various degrees of importance in the administrative system and within the household of the Shehu.

Slaves of a noble, either a titled slave or a titled freeman, also fall into differing categories, which serve to determine their position. One class of slave is the susana, or house slave. He has been born in the household of his master, usually of a line of slaves who have always been slaves of one

175 family. The susana has distinctive facial scars. The gavi
567
554 is a slave without a master. He may affiliate himself with a
[304] new master if he so chooses. Lastly, there is the slave who
175 was bought as a chattel in the market-place, a common practice
567
554 in the days when Kukawa was the capital. The susana is part
592 of his master's household, whereas the others are not. The susana of an important noble shares some of that importance by being part of the noble's household, and susana of titled nobles who were chimas served as kabuna of those nobles, and were themselves powerful individuals. The case cited above of the title Talba, granted to a slave in the household of the previous title-holder when there were no sons, indicates the position of a trusted susana in the household, and also demonstrates the nature of household unity.

567 Upon the death of a man who owns slaves, his son inherits
428 his slaves. Slaves are inherited just like other forms of
[643] property. The one exception to this is that the Shehu may take any slaves or chirs of one of his kabuna, either slave or
567 free, after that man's death. The rule governing children of slaves is that if the mother is a slave, the child is himself a slave of his mother's master. Status of the father does not enter in determining whether a child is slave or free, so that the offspring of a slave father and a free mother are
567 themselves free. A slave says "kəmanyi" (my lord) to his mas-
576
178 ter, though nowadays people say that "kəmanyi" is said only to Allah. Under the Mais of old, all talaka said "kəmanyi" to the

Furthermore the status of the slave was never that
567 of a degraded individual, since titled slaves were themselves
178 part of the nobility. In fact, a slave who is part of an im-
554 portant man's household may refer to "talaka" in a derogatory
156 manner, indicating his own superior position to that of the impoverished peasant farmer.

3. Talaka.

565 The talaka in the towns and villages formed the bulk of the population in the days of the empire just as they do today. In former times they were the talaka of a particular chima; today they are the talaka of a particular District Head.

565 But the class of talaka is far from homogeneous. The
369 primary distinction to be made is between rural and urban
554 talaka. Rural talaka do tend to be a rather homogeneous group. Urban talaka may fall into a variety of types, which differ in
[175] their relative wealth and prestige. In the days of the empire
565 there were wealthy talaka who lived in the cities. Trade had
369 always been important in Bornu, and a class of important trad-
554 ers formed a segment of the urban talaka population. Similarly,
463 the various specialists and artisans who lived in the towns and
[441] cities formed distinct groups within the talaka population, just as other types of specialists were and still are viewed as low-status groups.

565 Since they are all talaka, none wield political power, and
554 so one might say that there were no differences between the various types of talaka with respect to power. However, there

his allegiance to the Ajia who might otherwise be tempted to replace him with one of his own men.

The kabuna represent a special category in the administration of the district. The colonial administration makes no provision for the kabuna; they are not NA appointees as are all the other officeholders mentioned above; they receive no salary. Yet, the services which they perform are vital if the district bureaucracy is to continue to function smoothly. The kabuna represent a traditional Kanuri social category whose roles are primarily in the political sphere. The roles of the kabuna have been slightly modified and adapted to the modern situation, but the relationship between kabuna and Ajia and between kabuna and populace is a traditional one and is once again typical of the persistence of the old social stratification system into the present.

Yerima Mustapha has fifty-nine kabuna at Geidam. Some are slaves; some are free. Many have been with Yerima for years and years. Head of all the kabuna is Wakil Ali, a slave. The kabuna are each given a house to live in, a horse belonging to Yerima, a plot of land to farm, and ceremonial trappings for themselves and for their horses. In turn, they swear allegiance to Yerima and work for him.

2. A history of important office-holders in Geidam.

The present town of Geidam is on the site of an old town called Damjeri. Five miles to the west of the present Geidam

[GEIDAM]

175 [103] was an old town called Geidam Balara, from which the town today takes its name. In the eighteenth century, when the capital of Bornu was at Birni Ngazargamo not far off, Geidam was part of the Mai's lands. Later, when Kukawa became the capital, and the Mais were replaced by the Shehus, Geidam became part 175 634 [632] of the fief granted to the Imam. Since Geidam District is very large, it was divided among a number of chimas. The town of Geidam (Dɔmjeri and Geidam Balara, at that time) was controlled by Kazella Ibrahim Geidama, a slave of the Imam who served as chima gana (literally little chima--serving the real chima who lived in the capital). Geidam was a kalyari, an area under the authority of a slave.

The first Ajia of Geidam, in the early years of the twentieth century was Kazella Sulama, a slave of the Shehu's. He was followed by Aba Rəfəgə, a son of Shehu Ibrahim, who served [646] as Ajia of Geidam until his death in 1915. Maiduguri had not yet been built and the Mounted Infantry, along with many Europeans, were stationed in Geidam. Aba Rəfəgə was the most important of the Ajias at that time. Kazella Kakami (Kaigama) then became the Ajia of Geidam, where he served for almost thirty years until his death in January, 1944. Kaigama Kakami was the son of Kaigama Bilei, the commander of the army during the days of Shehu Laminu. His son, Kaigama Zubairu, succeeded to the title of Kaigama and to the office of Ajia of Geidam. Kaigama Zubairu remained Ajia of Geidam for ten years, until he was demoted to a smaller district, Dɔmboa, in 1954. In 1954 Yerima

[GEIDAM]

175 634 Mustapha, another holder of a great title, was promoted from Magumeri District to Geidam District to replace Kalgama Zubairu.

175 634 554 [167] Yerima Mustapha is of the family of Shuwa kabuna who came into Bornu with Shehu Laminu. The Shuwa and Kanembu nobles who entered Bornu at that time did not bear Kanuri titles. However, as they were the heads of Shuwa and Kanembu lineages (jili), their own names took on the semblance of titles. Two such titles which were perpetuated within Yerima Mustapha's family were "Laminu" and "Malam Tərab". Laminu Jitia, a sister's son of Malam Tərab, succeeded as head of the house of Malam Tərab, who had been the chima over Magumeri at the time of Shehu Umar (son of Shehu Laminu). The position of head of that house, with the accompanying title of "Malam Tərab" passed out of the hands of lineal descendants in succeeding generations when the Shehu appointed non-family men to the position. A son of Laminu Jitia, Aba Sanda Kura, was made Ajia of Magumeri, the original fief of Malam Tərab. He then took the title "Laminu", so that a new Kanuri title was created. Still later, the position of Ajia of Magumeri passed out of the hands of the "Laminu" family. The present Yerima Mustapha, a great-grandson of Laminu Jitia, held the title of "Laminu" from 1926 until 1938.

159 634 554 Yerima Mustapha was born in 1901. He received a primary school education and became a Sanitation Inspector and Vaccinator in 1924. In 1932 he was made Ajia of Fune District, where he resided first at Ngəlzerma and later at Damagum. At that time he used the title "Laminu." The present Shehu of

[GEIDAM]

159 Bornu, Shehu Umar, succeeded to the throne in 1937. A year later he conferred the title of "Yerima" on Yerima Mustapha. The title "Yerima" is one of the highest Kanuri titles. It had been held by a Kanuri family, but at the time that Yerima Mustapha succeeded to it, the last title-holder had left no sons. Several members of the Shehu's own family sought the title, but it was given to Yerima Mustapha because he had been close to the Shehu, though his own family had no claim to the title of "Yerima." In 1943 Yerima Mustapha was made the Ajia in Magumeri where his family had lived for generations. He replaced the dismissed Aba Jatau, son of Shehu Garbai, as Ajia in Magumeri. For eleven years Yerima Mustapha remained in Magumeri; in 1954 he was moved to Geidam District, the largest in the province, after Kaigama Zubairu was demoted.

175 The personal history of the Lowans of Geidam is intimately bound to the history of the several Ajias who have governed in the district. In the course of the eleven years that Yerima served as Ajia of Magumeri a number of his most trusted kabuna were appointed as Lowans in the district. When Yerima left Magumeri, among the heritage left for the Ajia who replaced him, Digma, were the many Lowans who had sworn allegiance to the departed Ajia. They included Lowan Maina, Lowan of Magumeri town, formerly Yerima's Wakil. In identical fashion, Kaigama Zubairu left Lowans in Geidam who had been his kabuna previously. The two Kanuri Lowans of Geidam at the time that Yerima came there were Lowan Ashek and Lowan Kagu. Lowan Kagu

[GEIDAM]

175 632 634 was a very young man, whose father had been a Lowan under Kaigama before him. In fact, years earlier Geidam had had one Lowan instead of three--and the single Lowan had been the grandfather of Lowan Kagu. Then the town was split into three wards, each with its Lowan. At that time, Lowan Ashek, who had been a kabuna of Kaigama's and his slave as well, became a Lowan. Lowan Kagu's father was also made Lowan of a ward, succeeding his father; and the young Lowan Kagu in turn succeeded his father at his father's death.

175 632 634 66 The Lowans of Geidam were loyal to the departed Kaigama, but now it was necessary to demonstrate that they could transfer their loyalty to Yerima Mustapha, the new Ajia of Geidam and their new master. Lowan Ashek, an older and more experienced man, was able to do this. He became one of Yerima's kabuna, and while he is far from the most trusted of Yerima's men, he continues to serve as Lowan under Yerima since he knows the people of his ward well and had been performing the job for some years. Lowan Kagu was young, and was unable to control his feelings in the face of strains created by the situation. He, too, might have bridged the difficult transition as Lowan Ashek had done, had he had more experience in office. As it was, he was dismissed shortly after Yerima's arrival because he lost his temper in an argument with Yerima and threw a book in his face.

Yerima was then free to appoint one of his own men to replace Lowan Kagu. When he was approached and asked whom he

wished to have as the new Lowan, he replied that he was indifferent. The name of Kolo Kolo was then submitted to the town council, the only name submitted. Eight council members voted for Kolo Kolo as new Lowan; two wrote in other names. Kolo Kolo then became the new Lowan. He had been a resident in Geidam for twenty years before Yerima came to the town, and had been an important dilelma dealing in cows. Kolo Kolo is of the same family as Yerima's mother. When Yerima came to Geidam as Ajia, Kolo Kolo joined him as a kabuna, one of the more important kabuna. At the first opportunity he was made a Lowan. He is a good choice as Lowan as he has long been a resident of Geidam, and is acceptable to the townspeople. At the same time, he is a kabuna of Yerima's, and is completely devoted to Yerima, who made it all possible. Yerima bears no grudge against Lowan Kagu. He specifically states that if Lowan Kagu, who is still a young man, has learned from the experience and can demonstrate through his behavior that his attitudes have changed, he may well be appointed Lowan again, should a future opportunity arise. Indeed, it appears that Yerima would welcome this, were he assured of Lowan Kagu's loyalty to him, as it would smooth over old rifts and would restore Lowan Kagu to a position which had long been in his family and to which he was entitled.

The courts in Bornu are intended, theoretically, to operate independently from the political arm of government, and in particular to be free of all influence from the Ajias. The

[p.8]

Chapter II

Ancient Roots to 1900

• 175

The existence since earliest historic times of Empires and petty states, along the southern ridge of the Sahara, from Lake Chad over to the Sene-Gambia region of the Atlantic Ocean, that is to say roughly along the line of 12 degrees north latitude has appealed to writers for centuries. There is quite a body of early Arabic literature on the subject, and from the 19th century forward, an ever increasing group of European writers have become interested in Sudanic history. Although this material makes fascinating reading to anyone interested in the region as a whole, it is not within the purposes of the present work to summarize the historical events of the Sudan, the rise of Songhai, Mali, Ghana and their respective declines. Such an account would take the present discussion far off its limited scope of interest in the area of the Chad basin. However, two main points must be kept in mind which stem from this large body of literature. Firstly, there were to the west of Bornu throughout its entire history large states and empires which were rising, falling and expanding, and with whom Bornu was always in contact. Secondly, that all these empires and petty states maintained constant contacts, not only with one another, but with the great Muslim powers of North Africa and Spain through the medium of the ancient caravan routes of the Sahara.

175
177

The possibilities of contact of peoples across the Sudan to the east of Chad is a much thornier question, and very little has ever been done by competent scholars to relate the eastern Sudan to the central and western portions.(1)

The contacts of the Sudanic peoples with the south have either

(1) See Arkell, A.J. History of Darfur, Sudan Notes and Records, Vol. 32, 1951, pp.33-38, in which he discusses the influence of Bornu on Darfur.

• 175
177

been left out of the historical accounts of the area or have been played down so considerably that the reader finds it easy to forget that the Sudan is geographically adjacent to the Guinea coast. Lady Lugard (1) set the style for this kind of thinking when she described the Sudan as "facing north". Yet the gold, the slaves, and the lowly kola-nut, which became popular as an article of consumption from Kano to Tripoli, all required well established relationships and contacts between the peoples of the Sudan and those to the south of them from very early times.

174
797

Evidence on the early beginning of the Kanuri people is scant. Linguistically they belong to the central Saharan group of languages which extends like a boot into modern northeastern Nigeria, but for the most part takes up the area of the central Sahara, reaching north to include a good portion of Fezzan, all of Tibesti, and stretching eastward in the desert until it meets the Afro-Asiatic group of languages, the so-called Hamito-Semitic group. (2) Greenberg comments on the distinctiveness of the central Saharan group of tongues, and we may safely attribute to them a respectable time depth. (3) Gautier has shown that Lake Chad delivered water into the Borku region in past times. (4) According to another writer the whole territory northeast of Lake Chad was a great swampy shallow area until the early centuries of the Christian era. This was maintained by the overflow through a river valley (the Bahr el Ghazal) which is now only a dry depression. The surplus Chad water still flows along this passage today beneath the soil. Less than a century ago, Nachtigal (5) saw the first

174
133

(1) Shaw, F.L. (Lady Lugard), A Tropical Dependency (London), 1905, p.3.
(2) Greenberg, J.E., Studies in African Linguistic Classification: IV Hamito-Semetics, SWJ, 6, 1950.
(3) Gautier, E.F., Sahara the Great Desert, (London) 1935, pp.68-69.
(4) Tilho, J. in Geographic Journal LVI, 1920, quoted in Carpenter, Rhys, A Trans-Saharan Caravan route in Herodotus, Americal Journal of Archeology, Vol. 60, 1956, p. 240.
(5) Nachtigal, G., Sahara und Sudan, p. 77ff

174 133 80 miles of its bed in flood and boats being used in these seasonal swamps.(1) Carpenter feels that it was these wet lands south of the Fezzan rather than the Niger that Eteerchus spoke of to Herodotus. It seems reasonable to suppose thatas these enormous wet lands dried up central Saharan speaking peoples followed the course of this retreat and moved slowly over the centuries into the Chad basin, or at least concentrated more densely in this geographically favourable area.

175 Until more historical and archeological research has been carried out, it would be wise to neglect some of the later writers' fanciful reconstructions and to concur with the ever careful Barth, in speaking of the first centuries of the Kanuri kingdom as its "silent beginnings".(2)

175 797 Most scholars are agreed that the rulers of Bornu embraced Islam somewhere around the end of the 11th century. El Bekri writing circa 1067 A.D. speaks of the people of Kanem as idolators.(3) However it is most likely that besides consulting merchants and travellers, he was consulting older [173] texts on the subject. The king lists all agree on the fact that Mai (king) Hume (1085-1097 A.D.) died in Egypt on the way to Mecca, and it is upon this evidence that Islam is at present dated in Bornu.(4)

[177] Urvoy feels that this contact with Islam brought with it the knowledge of expansionism, powerful monarchy, and the idea of tributaries.(5) Whether this is true, or whether Islam only enhanced tendencies

175 642 already present is impossible to say at present. Whatever the answer, it is recorded that the son of the above mentioned Hume, Dunama I (1097-1150 A.D.) expanded the little state of Kanem, northeast of Lake Chad, into

(1) Carpenter, Khye, op.cit. p. 239.
(2) Barth, H. Travels in North and Central Africa, Vol.II (London) 1857, p. 643.
(3) El Bekri, quoted in Barth, H. op. cit., p. 634.
(4) Urvoy, Y. Chronologie du Bornu, Journal de la Société des Africanistes, 12, 2, 1942, pp. 271-289.
(5) Urvoy, Y. Histoire de l'Empire du Bornu, Mem. IFAN, 7, 1949, p.36

a large Empire with the result that Kanem became a well known state in the Islamic world of the 12th century. By the 13th century, Kanem had extended itself to include a large region in the Chad basin, including present day Bornu, and more importantly was in control of the central Sahara with its trade route to Tripoli.(1) Friendship was contracted with the Hafsid rulers of Tunis, and we are told by Ibn Said writing at this time that a giraffe was sent by the King of Kanem to the Sultan of Tripoli as a present. He further notes that the practice of Islam is widespread amongst the population of Kanem at this time.(2) Kachim Biri, the reigning monarch from 1242-43 A.D., ordered the construction of a traveler's house for Kanuri pilgrims in the city of Cairo.(3) At the other end of the Muslim world, in Spain, a poet from Kanem was employed at this period in the court of El Mansur (1190-1214) at Seville, to sing the Sultan's praises. We are told by Lady Lugard that early references describe this person as a "learned and cultured poet, a black of the Sudan, Abu Ishah al Kanemi".(4)

Although information on the internal affairs of Kanem is scarce for this period, these outward ripples indicate extensive contacts and peaceful relations between a well organized state and the rest of the Muslim world of the 12th and 13th centuries. Since the early Arabic travellers who came to Ghana, Mali and Songhai were often told of the existence of Kanem to the east, it can be assumed that contacts across the Sudan were kept up and utilized as much as the northerly ones.(5)

Local tradition in Bornu at the time of Barth's visit (1851) explained the eventual collapse of the great empire of Kanem in an interest-

(1) Ibn Said writing of the rule of Dunama Ahmed (1221-1295 A.D.) says it included present day Bornu. Later writers claimed that Bornu reached to the Nile in this period. (See, Barth, H. op. cit.Vol.II, p. 641.)
(2) Urvoy, Y. op. cit., 1949, p. 369.
(3) Burckhardt, J.L., Travels in Nubia, (London) 1819.
(4) Shaw, F.L., (Lady Lugard), op. cit. p 65.
(5) See, Battutu Ibn, Travels in Asia and Africa, trans.H.A.R. Gibb (London) 1929.

173
669 ing fashion. The legend claims (1) that Dunama, the great 17th Mai of Kanem (1221-1259 A.D.) "laid the foundation for the ensuing disaster of the Empire by opening the sacred talisman of Bornu", for it (the talisman) called forth and provoked every powerful man to ambition and intrigues, and there followed after this reign a period of civil wars, and rapid changes in the monarchy, often involving regicide. It was at this time that the vassal state of the Bulala on the eastern boundary of Kanem grew towards an ever stronger independence, and finally toppled the Kanuri kingdom. We are told in the Chronicle translated by Barth that during the reign of the 27th Mai, Daud (1377-1386 A.D.) the Kanuri were decisively
[131] beaten by the Bulala. (2) By 1394 A.D., the 31st Mai, Omar (1394-1398 A.D.) finally gave up Kanem and came to Bornu proper to set up a kingdom in retreat somewhere between the present city of Maiduguri and the town of Gujba.

There followed a period of unrest and internal strife for about 75 years, during which many kings took the throne and were in turn overthrown or murdered. The kingdom was in a constant state of civil war
• 175 within and set upon by enemies from without. Palmer (3) in his researches
648 has found references to a letter sent at this time to Cairo from the Kanuri monarch, asking the Caliph to order the Arabs of Wadai to stop helping the Bulala raid amongst the Kanuri for slaves, since they (the Kanuri) were all good Muslims, and not infidels to be treated as potential slaves for the taking. More evidence of the "Sturm und Drang" quality of the period is indicated by the fact that a Mai of this time lived away from Bornu in the Hausa city of Kano which had been in the past a vassal state of the Kanuri empire.

(1) Barth, H., op. cit. Vol. II; King list, pp 633-671.
(2) Ibid; p. 634.
(3) Palmer, H. The Bornu Sahara and Sudan, (London) 1936, p. 218

175
642 However, resuscitation was at hand. In the last part of the 15th century, the kingdom was reconsolidated by the 48th Mai, Ali Ghajideni (1472-1504 A.D.), who quelled the civil wars and restored some measure of peace between the high ranking officials, with himself firmly [103] in authority. He built a new capital, Birni Gazargamo on the river Ye [361] (Komadu'u Yobe), about half way between the present towns of Damasak and Geidam, on the border of Nigeria and French West Africa in Bornu Province. [648] His reign was marked by the re-conquest of the territory of Kanem, north- [721] east of Chad, the extension of Bornu hegemony into Borku and Tibesti in the north, and continual but indecisive warfare against the powerful empire 175 of Songhai in the west. It is also about this time that Bornu is first mentioned in the early European maps of Africa put out by the Portugese cartographers of the late 15th century. Mai Ali's reign was followed by a series of others no less notable, including that of Mai Idris Alooma, for whom we have a contemporary record written by his court scribe sometime around the beginning of the 17th century.(1) It is Idris who is supposed to have introduced the technique of burnt brick into the area. However, there is some doubt on this point for it is known that the Songhai king Mansa Musa brought back from his great pilgrimage a Granada poet and architect, Es Saheli, who built a mosque at Gao (200 miles due east of Timbuctu on the Niger) of burnt brick at the beginning of the 14th century.(2)

[721] When the second empire was founded at Birni Gazargamo, fighting increased against the So, a people with whom the Kanuri seem to have 174 fought continually throughout their history. A small digression must be made here in order to assess these often mentioned So people of the ancient traditions. These people are said to have been native to the Bornu

(1) Ahmed ibn Fartua: History of the First Twelve Years of the Mai Idris Alooma, 1571-1583, by his Imam; trans. by H.R. Palmer, 1926.
(2) Bovill, E.W., Caravans of the Old Sahara, London, 1933, p. 73

174 area before the arrival of the Kanuri. French workers claim that the Kotoko tribe who live today around the area of Fort Lamy are the contemporary descendants of the ancient So peoples, and French archeologists have been digging up "So" sites for some years.(1) Kanuri traditions speak of the So as "giants" whom they finally vanquished after suffering great tribulations. Many of the monarchs in the Bornu King lists are described as dying in battle against the So. The stories of these "giants" are not however confined to Kanuri traditions, but can be found all over the Chad area, and well up into the desert, especially around Bilma.(2) This last point suggests a hypothesis that the So were really not any one group of people but a linguistic category in the Central Sahara, referring to aboriginal inhabitants who opposed the incoming group, or, against whom "our" group had to fight in times gone by. To support this argument, there is the evidence that the word So is an Arab usage from the Maghreb, which refers generally to all dark skinned peoples of Tibesti and the Sudan.(3) When it is realized that the first writers of Kanuri history must have been able to speak Arabic, as well as having a knowledge of its script, it is not surprising that this North African word for the indigenous people of the Sudan should be carried down to the present day. This leads to the conclusion that any search for the So culture, using the traditions of the present day inhabitants, is doomed to disappointment, for it is most likely that there was not one, but many So cultures and peoples.

175 648 Soon after the founding of the city of Birni Gasargamo, Bornu achieved a florescence in its history. During this second zenith of the Kanuri empire, Bornu vied with Songhai as the most powerful of the great Sudanic states. Embassies were maintained at Tripoli and the Hausa states

(1) Seliquer Capitaine; Elements d'une Etude Archeologique du Pays du Tchad, Bull. IFAN, Vol. 7, 1945, pp.191-209.
(2) Buchanan, Angus; Sahara, quoted in Palmer, H. op. cit., p. 126.
(3) Bovill, W.E., op. cit. p.23.

175 648 paid tribute to imperial Bornu, although very often the Songhai would extend themselves and the Hausa would face around for a short while to bow to the suzerainty of Timbuctu.(1) Kanuri power also extended up into the Fezzan taking in the important salt works of Bilma. In the east, Bornu hegemony probably reached into the Darfur region and in the south to the present town of Biu in south Bornu.(2)

175 178 From this pinnacle of majesty at the beginning of the 17th century a slow decline ensued which continued from the time of the 55th Mai, Muhammed (1602-1618 A.D.), son of Mai Idris Alooma, through the 18th century until the collapse of the second Kanuri empire in 1808. Although none of the writers are agreed on the causes of this decline it is possible that the monarchy and the court life had become so overly elaborate and ritualized, that it hampered the operation of effective leadership in a state requiring constant vigilance and warfare for its survival. It is reported that throughout almost the entire 18th century, the Mais rarely, if ever, left the confines of the palace during their reigns.(3) Traditions during this period tell of famines and pious leadership, rather than administrative and military successes.

175 721 From about the 14th century onwards a nomadic cattle people, the Fulani, had been filtering into the Sudan from the northwest and slowly moving across the whole of what is today Northern Nigeria. In February of 1804, for a number of political and religious reasons, a Fulani religious leader, Othman dan Fodio, declared a Hejira, or Flight from Digal (evil), which was an expression of defiance and aggression towards the Hausa leaders. From this period forward he and his warrior-scholar son, Bello, carried on a holy war in the Sudan that resulted finally in an empire

(1) Shaw, F. L. (Lady Lugard), op. cit. p. 279
(2) Arkell, A.J. The History of Darfur; Sudan Notes and Records, Vol. 33 p. 246.
(3) Stenning, D. Nomads of the Great Forest (Ms.) 1955

175
721

with its center at Sokoto. The Fulani who had settled in Bornu were encouraged to rise up and support the war, and soon Bornu felt the onslaught of Fulani forces. In 1804-5, Kano sent for help to its suzerain state of Bornu and a Kanuri force was dispatched to aid the vassal in quelling the revolt. This relief force was soundly beaten by the insurgents and Kano fell under the rule of the Fulani. These and other early successes encouraged the Bornu Fulani who began organising their revolt in Western Bornu and declaring themselves openly for Othman dan Fodio. We still have letters from this period sent back and forth between the Fulani and the Kanuri. The Kanuri scribes write of the attack as an outrage since it is a holy war against themselves, true believers, while the Fulani write of cruel and pagan practices being carried out in Bornu which must be cleansed. However the political nature of the campaign was obvious to all concerned, as it is to us in retrospect.(1) In 1808, a Fulani chief, Gwoni Muhktar, organized a force and moved against Birni Gazargamo, the ancient capital. It was taken and sacked. Some 44 years later in 1852, Barth met a man in Bornu who had been in the old capital on the day it fell. According to this report the attack was quite sudden and very little opposition was offered. The King and his courtiers left hurriedly by the east gate, while the Fulani entered the west gate in triumph.

An appeal for help was sent to a Kanemi Sheikh, Mohammad el Aminu, who with the help of Kanembu and Shuwa Arabs, had prevented Fulani risings on the western and northern shores of Lake Chad.(2) El Aminu or Laminu as he is remembered today sent his son and a force to help the Kanuri and nine months after the capital had fallen it was retaken. Laminu wrote

(1) Bovill, E.W. The Golden Trade of the Moors, (London) 1958, p. 230, feels that this Fulani expansion was primarily a religious movement. Nevertheless there can be no doubt that the end result of the Holy War was the Fulani Empire of Sokoto.

(2) A tribal leader from Kanem, the territoy north and northeast of Lake Chad.

175
643 (1)
Bornu in the 1820's.

In 1835 Shehu Lamino retired and his son Umar (1835-1880) took over the effective headship of the Bornu state. Like his father, he attempted to maintain and expand the kingdom, while keeping the old Mai on the throne. During one of Umar's western campaigns against Zinder, 175 669 721 the puppet Mai, Ibrahim appealed to Wadai for help in restoring him as the rightful ruler of Bornu against the Kanembu Shehu who had usurped the power. Umar returned from his Zinder campaign to find himself being attacked from the east by Wadai. Hearing of the Mai's instigation of this aggression, Umar put the puppet ruler in irons and tried to fight the Wadai forces at Logone, south of Lake Chad, but he was soundly defeated. Kuka was sacked, and the Wadai leader put Ali the young brother of the Mai on the throne. Umar, in high dudgeon, executed Ibrahim and bribed the Wadai forces to withdraw from Bornu. The young Ali and his small following were now attacked and defeated, during which encounter Ali lost his life. And [643] so ended the dynasty of the Magumi Sefuwa of Bornu. Shehu Umar declared himself the sole ruler of Bornu and rebuilt the city of Kuka which Barth 173 643 644 visited in the 1850's. Local tradition marks this occasion by telling how Shehu Umar was the first of the Bornu monarchs ever to sit on a chair. Before this time leaders had always sat on rugs. It is also related of him that he took a member of the royal family, Ali Mairami, who was the son of a daughter of Mai Dunama (1810-1818), (i.e. he was not in line for the succession) and made him a Maisuli or joking king, who could joke with and chastise the Shehu in a manner prohibited to anyone else. This practice is still carried on today by the descendant of Ali Mairami in the court of the Shehu at Maiduguri.

(1) Denham, Dr. Clapperton H. Travels and Discoveries in North and Central Africa, 1826.

• 175

With minor disturbances, including one by the brother of Shehu Umar, in 1854, the Bornu kingdom maintained itself in a fairly stable condition, throughout the reign of Umar, and even afterwards during the reign of his son Bukr (1880-4). However, trouble was soon to come from the east.

In the Bahr el Ghazal and Darfur region of the present independent Sudan, an adventurer named Rabeh was slave raiding under the power of the first Egyptian governor of the Bahr, named Zubeyr,(1) in the 70's and early 80's. However Zubeyr's son Stiman headed a rebellion against Egyptian authority and was defeated, and his army disbanded. A remnant of this force headed westward under Rabeh who transformed this band of freebooters and pillagers into a disciplined army which, in the late 80's under the banners of the Mahdi, terrorized the Bahr el Ghazal, conquered Wadai, and defeated the Baghirmi kingdom east of Chad. In 1893, he engaged the Bornu army near Ngala and vanquished it. Whereupon he entered a defeated Bornu and literally raped the countryside. From 1893-6, he despoiled the entire area, putting to death many of the leading figures in Bornu who opposed him, and tried to spread his conquest as far west as possible. In this latter effort he was checked by a union of western forces and refugee Kanuri at the present site of Geidam in northwest Bornu. After 1896 from his capital at Dikwa, Rabeh seems to have attempted a consolidation of the kingdom and due to these efforts at administration a more moderate policy was followed. Nevertheless, his rule is remembered in Bornu today as the blackest period of their history. Old men are still alive who tell of the pillaging, burning, slave-raiding, killing and excessive extortion of the peasants, that was carried on during the "Rabeh period."

175 721 727

175 643

[173] [661]

(1) c.f. Balfour-Paul, H.G. History and Antiquities of Darfur, Sudan Antiquities Service, Museum Pamphlet #3 Khartoum, 1955.

175
642

The political organization of the 19th century was almost completely overhauled by Rabeh. Fiefs were re-constructed with new boundaries and given to his own followers, while the old fief holders were often killed. But it should be stressed that complete chaos was not the rule of the day, as many writers have assumed. Rabeh was establishing a state under a new and alien leadership. It had been done by Lamino at the beginning of the 19th century, albeit with much less internal turbulence. It is most probable that had history given him the chance Rabeh would have founded the third dynasty of the Bornu empire and linked its relations much more closely to the east. It was European events that impaired the direction of this development. Rabeh's triumph and abortive attempt at empire building was cut short because in the European world the "scramble for Africa" had come to Nigeria and was rapidly closing in on the would-be king.

- - - - - - - - -

127

The presence of a good sized literature on pre-British Bornu, including travellers's accounts, the extant collections of early Kanuri records, especially the historical writing of Ahmed ibn Fartua,(1) and the so-called "District Notebooks" of early 20th century British Colonial Officers who tried to reconstruct the pre-Rabeh political organisation and tax structure of Bornu, enable us to say something about the life of the Emirate in its pre-European period. To this list of sources can be added the oral traditions of contemporary Kanuri, especially some of the older men in and around the Shehu's court.

174
642

Very little remains at present (besides the archeological material) to record the life of Bornu in the early pre-Muslim days of the

(1) Ahmed ibn Fartua; op. cit.

174
642 kingdom. It is probable that the early state was organized as a group of clans, with one clan and a lineage within it as the ruling group. There is the possibility that this dominant group was an intrusive one, but this point has been so over-stressed with no substantiating data by other writers, that it would be wiser to leave it until sufficient archeological research has been done.

175
829 After the move to Bornu and the founding of the capital of Birni Gazargamo we have some contemporary data with which to assess the life of the times. Ibn Fartua expresses the feelings of a chief servant of the Mai concerning the ethical nature of the state in the 16th century. He says that " . . .every people relies on imitation of its leaders. The leader goes before and the people follow him. He leads them to the Garden as it were by a bridle, after giving the Book of Direction, glad tidings about the Faith, right direction, and sure guidance in the path of law. So every man knows his rights and his obligations to others. Most excellent is the fame of just deeds, and justice on the part of a Mai for one day is equal to service of God for sixty years . . . A place where there is an evil Mai is better than a place which has none." (1) Thus the structural position of the Mai is extolled as being even more important than its functions, for when a leader is present every man knows his relationship to other men, and the people are enjoined to feel blessed at the fact of political leadership per se.

175
631 The political organization of Bornu during the second florescence of the kingdom was structured outwards from the capital at Birni Gazaragamo with the cardinal directions of the State under the military protection of four titled noblemen. The south was under the Yuroma or chief eunuch; the north was held by the Mustrema (also a eunuch); the east by the Kaigama (a

(1) Ahmed ibn Fartua, op. cit. pp.10-11.

175 631 nobleman); and the west by the Yerima (a nobleman). As far as can be ascertained these men were not enfieffed of these portions of the kingdom (they held fiefs elsewhere), but were rather hereditary titles connected with military functions in one of the quarters of the state, or in the army as a whole. Thus the Mustrema was responsible for controlling raids upon the northern area of the realm, and was in charge of northern troops when the army of the kindgom was assembled for war. In contrast, Nguru, in the northwest, was held by the Galidima who still holds it today. The latter, unlike the other "subregents", but like the tributary vassals, resided in his territory as a kind of semi-independant king although he was also one of the paramount courtiers of the Bornu ruler. All other nobles lived at the capital under the watchful eye of their king, and toured their districts only when trouble was brewing or taxes were needed. Working within the above system was the organisation of the state into fiefdoms held by the nobility, rewarded servants of the king, and military personnel. Any person to whom a fief was given or who received it through inheritance from an original recipient (which was more often the case) was called the Chima Kura. As was pointed out, all nobles with the exception of the Galidima lived at the capital, and the administration of the fief was carried on by a Chima Gana (small Chima) who was most often a slave or trusted servant of the Chima Kura. The Chima Gana usually resided in the fief itself raising taxes and maintaining law and order. With this system it was easy to gear in vassal states or nomad peoples. Their leaders were simply made Chima Kura of the Kanuri state, which strengthened the leader's position in his own group after conquest, and manoeuvred him into the Kanuri political organization.(1) Local traditions are fairly unanimous in attributing contin-

175 631 634

(1) This office because of its different nature was also referred to as the Kura Jilibe (head of the tribe or clan). The Kura Jilibe was however acting as the Chima Kura of his group, in relation to the Bornu throne.

175 631 [173] Local traditions are fairly unanimous in attributing continuity to this system of fiefdoms when the dynastic power changed hands at the beginning of the 19th century. Gradually the state began to be organized as it was of old, before the Fulani attacks, although now the fiefs were distributed amongst the family, courtiers, slaves and eunuchs of the Shehu.

175 631 642 An early British report in Bornu indicates some of the dynamic qualities of the fief system as it operated in pre-British Bornu.(1) Tomlinson found that from 1893 to 1900 Rabeh had reduced the number of fiefs and for the most part placed them under his major lieutenants.(2) Being a stranger in a new land Rabeh had to keep his control as tight as possible and rely on a few trusted followers. Therefore the number of fiefs were reduced. Alternatively, when the Shehu was re-instated by the British and asked to help create "Districts" out of the old fiefs, he attempted to make as many of them as he could in order to obtain as large a body of followers as possible to consolidate his power.

173 634 [562] Although there is no mention made in any of the sources on Bornu, Kanuri informants claimed that the Chima Kura had the right to sell a fief if he so desired. Titled women were also given fiefs which were, as in the case of a male fiefholder, managed for them by slaves or servants in residence at the fief.

173 651 The pre-British taxation system is remembered as consisting of two separate levies. One, the <u>binèmram</u> collected in <u>binèm</u> (winter) was the property and organizational responsibility of the Chima Kura who owned the fief. Taxes were collected in kind at the local peasant level. The

(1) Tomlinson, F.J.P. <u>Report of Nganzai District</u>; 1918, in Prov. Office Maiduguri, Bornu, Prov. Nigeria.

(2) In a few cases, when the old Kanuri fiefholders declared allegiance to Rabeh, they were allowed to retain their fiefs. This occurred in the case of the fief of Magumeri in the 1890's.

173
651 Chima Kura sent out a messenger from the capital to his representative in the fief, the Chima Gana, instructing him of the total demand of the levy. The messenger and the Chima Gana then raised the tax levy in the fief and extracted a surplus for their pains.

Part of this tax was given to the Shehu by the Chima Kura as sada'a (tithe). However, we are told that another tax was levied (also called the sada'a) which was specifically a royal revenue. Opinion differs as to the organization of the levy. Some sources tell of the king selling collection rights to trusted courtiers, while others refer to this tax as a special harvest tithe collected by the fief-holder and his representatives, partly for himself and partly for the king.

173
634
[651] Within his holdings a fief-holder might use some of the area for his own purposes. For example, he might settle some of his slaves in a village and a large portion of the produce would come to him as his [792] rightful property. Or again, the fief-holder might give a segment of his holding to a mallam or a group of mallams (religious teachers and practioners) so that they might have land to farm and support themselves. [103] Very often such a settlement would be sahram, i.e. tax exempt. These areas [621] can still be noted in Bornu today in the names of villages. A village called Karliyari, or slave town is the present site of one of the old slave settlements in a fief, while the name Mallamari for a town refers to its past history as a town of mallams or holy men.

= 175
631
651 In the case of the vassal states which were subdued in war, a portion of the tithes collected by the local chief would always be sent off as tribute to the ruler of Bornu. To insure that this practice was carried out, the Bornu monarch often placed a servant or a slave (never a relative) in the capital of the vassal state. When Richardson reached Zinder in the 1850's, he found an Arab of Tripoli who had travelled widely

175
631
651 in the Mediterranean, ensconced in Zinder (a tributary of Bornu) as the representative of the Bornu monarch. A slave raid carried on into Bornu territory by the monarch of this petty state, for the purpose of allowing him to pay some of his personal debts, was condoned by the Bornu "consul" because a portion of the spoils from the raid was to be sent to the Shehu. Richardson also expressed the opinion that much of the real power in Zinder was in the hands of the Shehu's Representative rather than with the local authorities.(1)

175
651 From the earliest records extant of the Kanuri empire in Kanem right up until the arrival of the British, a system of tax exemption obtained called the Mahram. Although it most often applied to religious mallams, who were recognized in this way for their esoteric knowledge in matters of law and religion, special services to the king were sometimes [212] rewarded in the same way. These exemptions were always recorded in writ- [451] ing, so that when the British arrived and began instituting their own form of universal taxation many of these documents, some claiming 990 years of [114] exemption, turned up. They were collected, translated and subsequently published by Palmer.(2)

175
692 Judicial power was divided between the political leaders and the Muslim Alkalai (judges), as it is today. In the kingdom of the Mais centered at Birni Gazargamo, traditions tell of the Kainin Kanendi, literally the second to the king. This man was the chief judge of the state and, it is said, the second most important man in the realm.

In the house and the quarter of the Mainin Kanendi were twelve [693] other judges, who with himself constituted the high court of the realm. In the larger towns, the king appointed local mallams to act as judges, from

(1) Richardson, J. Mission to Central Africa; Vol. II, pp. 182ff; 1853
(2) Palmer, H.R. op. cit. pp. 12-51.

175 692 693 [645] whom appeals could be made to the high court in the capital. The keeper of the records or scribe of the high court, the Talba was considered the third most important person in the kingdom. It is said that this high court plus its scribe served as a council to the king in the affairs of state because of its members' knowledge in matters of law and religion.

175 692 643 [631] When the Birni dynasty fell in the 19th century, Shehu Lamimu served as the highest judge in the land, thus bringing political and judicial functions even more closely together in the state. He kept the idea of an appeal court and local courts but did much of the high court adjudication himself. The relation of the temporal judiciary and its religious practitioners is illustrated by a European traveller's account in the 1820's,(1) who records that local judges' decisions could be reversed by the high court or the local political resident.

175 182 463 [44] The presence of a large upper class and a royal court with its patterns of specialized consumption, the uneven distribution of intensive cropping and craft production localities, the contacts with North Africa and to a lesser extent the western Sudan, for the last 1000 years, have all acted as conditions supporting the differentiation of labour in Bornu. This has produced the idea and the physical reality of the market.

175 439 Trade has been a well organized aspect of the society for centuries. A complex system of distribution and production through the market was observed by the first travellers in the area. Grain was dispatched to Bilma up in the desert in return for salt. This trade so tied the people of Bilma to Bornu that even today when the trade has been much reduced, they still feel themselves very closely allied to the Kanuri. Natron from Lake Chad was taken to Kano and from there traded all over coastal West Africa.

(1) Denham, D. and Clapperton, H. op. cit. p.23

175
439 There is some information on a copper trade which the Kanuri middlemen carried on between Darfur in the east and the Nupe area of the Niger river in the west.(1) Contacts with southern people although most often channelled through Kano were sometimes made directly in the trade carried
175 on for the much desired kola-nut. Finally, slavery was a specialized
567 trade from which political figures had a ready source of income. The slaves were often sold locally through middlemen although there was an eager market for them across the desert in Tripoli, Tunis and Cairo.

175
436 Currency seems to have come rather late to Bornu as compared with some of the other Sudanese countries. Certainly the nobles and large traders knew of its use in the early 19th century, but the Kanuri peasant had not taken up the customs of currency use that were prevalent amongst his contemporaries in other places such as Kano and Zinder at the time. In the 1820's Clapperton noticed that it was not until he arrived at Katagum, on the way to Kano from Bornu, that cowrie shells were being used as currency. Although he did notice that rolls of cloth from native weavers could be used as currency in some of the Bornu markets.(2) By 1850 the rolls or strips of cloth (gaba'a) were being slowly replaced in Bornu by the cowrie shell.(3) Amongst the traders and the upper classes, both Maria Theresa and Spanish dollars were available for use as money and were even seen in limited use in the Kuka market in the 1850's. However Barth's most revealing passage in this respect tells of his difficulty in buying food from the rural peasants who came to market and refused to have anything to
[437] do with the currency. In order to buy grain, it was necessary for Barth to change his M. T. dollars to cowries, then buy one or more kulu'u (men's robes) and then barter this item of clothing for the required cereal. That

(1) See Arkell, A.J. 1952
(2) Denham,D. and Clapperton H; op. cit. Clapperton's Journal, p.21.
(3) Barth, H; op. cit. Vol. II, p.311.

175 436 is to say, even those peasants marketing in the capital had not accepted the use of currency in 1850. Nevertheless some levels of the society must have been using the gursu (M.T. dollars) for some time, since Denham remarks that strips of cloth used for currency could be purchased in Bornu for forty to the M.T. dollar in the 1820's.(1) The market scenes observed by both Barth and earlier by Denham in the 19th century differ only slightly from those observed anywhere in Bornu today.

175 641 721 As far as can be inferred from available sources, warfare and slave raiding made the life of the common people one of uneasy tension. Being the serf of one chief might not prevent a nearby potentate from sending out a raiding party which might easily clear out an entire local area of its inhabitants. The criterion which directed slave raiding only upon pagans was often honoured in the breach, especially if a chief's debts were [701] pressing. Again local life was often broken up by the feudal service in war which peasants owed to their chiefs. We are told in the history of Bornu of armies of thousands and campaigns which were waged annually year [182] after year for generations. In discussing this point, Denham felt that warfare resulted in a very mobile society where fortunes rose and fell rapidly and life as an intrinsic value was not highly regarded.(2) People in towns and villages, he says, are often mercilessly attacked and plundered. Accounts tell how the inhabitants, in attempting to fly, were 175 727 caught by their attackers, whereupon, in most instances, the men were killed and the women and children lashed together and taken as slaves. Military men and their followers often died in droves on campaigns, widowing all their wives and concubines at one blow.

In response to this constant warfare, villages in danger would

(1) Denham, D. and Clapperton; op. cit. p. 54
(2) Ibid; p. 135

175 In response to this constant warfare, villages in
361 danger would 29.
712 either build near hills, to which they would retire in case of attack, if they lived in the south, or hide the site in a bushy place with barricaded and camouflaged entrance paths to the town. They would often build large covered holes with spikes at the bottom to stop intruders, especially raiders on horseback. Again, many villages would construct large mud-stockaded walls for the same protective reason.

175 This pattern of constant warfare in Bornu is very old. The
721 contemporary record of the reign of Mai Idris Alooma, which has been pre-
178 served, is almost entirely an account of one military campaign after
175 another. Firearms have been used in Bornu for at least 400 years, and the
411 first request that Shehu Lamino made of the European explorers, who found
178 their way there in the 1820's, was for a cannon.(1) The interest in war-
175 fare by the leaders was reflected in the highly organized manner in which
726 warfare was conducted. Thus, before the battle witnessed by Denham, the
[701] Shehu inspected at military maneuvers of his troops. Each chief and slave commander (Kachella) had his own little "general staff" of close associates and when the order to advance on the enemy was given, each of these little "staffs" led their own groups forward. When the maneuvers were over, one of the groups was given the task for that day of watch and sentry duty for the entire camp.

173 Informants in Maiduguri recalled 24 Kachellas in pre-Rabeh
701 Bornu. Each had a "regiment" of cavalry and foot-soldiers, and the army was drawn into two divisions, under twelve Kachellas per unit. The first
[644] was called the "house" force. It generally remained close to the Shehu, and its soldiers constituted a standing army or palace guard whose primary duty was the protection of the monarchy. The second division was called the "bush" unit, not because it fought outside the capital, but rather be-

(1) Ibid., p. 149.

173
701 cause its soldiers were peasant subjects and rural followers of fief holders, whose homes were not in the capital but out in the Bornu countryside. In the pre-19th century military system, each of the four regional military leaders (the Yuroma, Mustrema, Kaigama, and Yerima) had under him a force of Kachellas, each of which in turn headed up a regiment of foot-soldiers and cavalry.

175
727 Very often a diplomatic Bornu ruler, after having defeated his enemy in battle would assess the situation and try to decide whether or not the chief of the opposing side (if Muslim) was worth keeping. If not he was executed. But very often the rebel or enemy leader was humbled, then raised up after a defeat and encouraged to become a loyal vassal of the King of Bornu.

175
643
703
726 It is also interesting to note that at least part of the morale of Shehu Laminu's army resided in the general belief in his supernatural powers as a military leader. The night before the battle witnessed by Denham it was reported that Laminu had written charms (verses from the Koran) and his enemies' spears and arrows were blunted and found so in the morning by their owners on the day of battle. Laminu was extremely anxious that Denham set off a rocket for him on the night before the battle, presumably for the same reason.

War itself was highly organized. The maintenance of the state required elaborate rituals and ceremonies to dramatize militarism, and the belief in the supernatural power of the leader or his religious associates helped maintain the morale of the army, which was also goaded on by a comprehensive system of sharing in the plunder. However, this tended to create for the average citizen an areal mobility not usually associated
175
721 with peasant life in Africa. A man might return from the wars to his village on the borders of the state to find no village, nor wife, nor home,

175
721 since the absence of the local chief with a force of young men had tempted the neighbouring chief, or some wandering nomad raiders, to plunder the town for slaves and booty.

178
642 When the British arrived in Bornu to weld the Emirate into their Colonial Empire, it should be emphasized that they were confronted by a way of life, whose known and partly recorded past had been flowing on through at least 1100 years of continuous, unbroken and independent national history. During that time the power of the monarchy had risen and fallen in successive waves of power and decline. In the 12th and 13th centuries the first Kanuri florescence occurred in Kanem, northeast of Lake Chad, only to decline in the 14th century and finally beat a forced retreat from the center of their empire into Bornu proper, to the west of the Lake. Here, to the south of the river Yo, they hoped for some safety from the northern raiders which was afforded by the river. The 16th and 17th centuries saw the second emergence of a Kanuri Empire in the Sudan, which, although often neglected by historians of the region, was effective enough to resist the eastward expansion of Songhai at the zenith of its power. Slow decline followed in the 17th and 18th centuries until a near collapse, due to Fulani expansionism at the beginning of the 19th century, could only be avoided by a new dynasty taking over the rule of the kingdom, which maintained itself and the kingdom until Rabeh's desecration of Bornu in 1893. However, even Rabeh was slowly beginning to reorganize the broken kingdom when the British arrived, and it is evident that the complete chaos, conventionally charged to Bornu at the beginning of the 19th century, has been over-emphasized. Forces of re-consolidation were in operation which would have kept the Bornu state in existence, albeit under a new dynasty.

It is evident from an appraisal of Kanuri history that its

3: Cohen E-4,5 (1956-1957) 1960 MS14 Kanuri MS14

Chapter III [p. 34]

The Colonial Period

175
648
178

The particular events and social changes occurring in Bornu during the last half century must be viewed as taking place within the larger setting of the British colonial regime of Northern Nigeria. For our present purposes, it is sufficient to note that during this period an English colonial administration had been grafted onto the indigenous social systems of the Northern Region through the use of what has come to be called "indirect rule".(1) This conjunction of the African social systems under the subordination of colonial rule has resulted in expanding trade, the inception of western education, the development of a native civil service, increased contact with other tribal groups, and a network of modern roads and means of communication. How these changes and the policy of "indirect rule" have affected Bornu is the concern of the present chapter.

175
648
643

Before the British arrived in Bornu, the French had already defeated and killed Rabeh and his son. They then re-instated the Kanuri Shehu, Sanda Kura, and subsequently his younger brother Garbai. These two ruled from Dikwa, Rabeh's old capital, which at the turn of the century was considered to be in French territory. The French allowed the Kanuri rulers to institute any system of political organization they wished as long as they could deliver 80,000 Maria Theresa dollars per annum to the French as tribute. In 1902, Governor Lugard sent Captain Morland to Bornu and it is reported that the Captain ". . . sent for Garbai and formally installed him as Shehu of British Bornu at Kuka."(2)

(1) See Lugard, F.D. (Sir) The Dual Mandate, (London) 1929; Cook, A.N. British Enterprise in Nigeria, (Philadelphia) 1943; Burns, (Sir) Alan, History of Nigeria, (London) 1955; Coleman, J.S., Nigeria, Background to Nationalism, (California) 1958.

(2) Annual Report: Bornu Province 1909. In the Provincial Office, Maiduguri, Bornu Province, Nigeria.

175
648
643 Data on how this was accomplished were not available in the public records of Bornu province. Therefore it can only be assumed (provisionally, until more information becomes available) that the British promise to rebuild Kuka, the old 19th century capital, must have appealed to the Shehu, and/or the French conceded to British demands for the Shehu to be brought to Bornu. Certainly since Britain had claim to Bornu as part of Nigeria from the days of the Chartered Companies (late 19th century), and was making good the claim, it was only logical from their viewpoint that the traditional ruler of Bornu should be allowed to sit on the throne
175
648 in the area historically connected with his reign. Taking the evidence of the French defeat of Rabeh, and their entry into Bornu with an armed force to defeat and kill his son, plus their establishment of the Shehu, it would seem as if the French from east of Lake Chad were trying to limit British expansion into Bornu by a fait accompli of possession, even though the western Chad basin had been ceded to England in the councils of European diplomacy.(1) In any event, all this manoeuvring on the part of the French proved of no avail, for it had also been decided in Europe that the Cameroons were to be administered by Germany, and the French soon had to cede even the area south of Lake Chad to that country.

175
648
634 "The first important step by the new British overlords was the sending out of the fiefholders to live in their fief-ships in 1903 ... These fiefs afterwards evolved into Districts and the most suitable men available were put in charge of them, the Shehu always being consulted
[631] in the selection. These men are now Ajia or District Headmen. This formed a chain of responsibility in the administration which the size of the Emirate and its small European staff immediately demanded."(2) However

(1) Langer, W.L. The Diplomacy of Imperialism,(New York) p. 131
(2) Annual Report 1909; op. cit.

175
648
634
643 before the fiefs developed into Districts it was discovered that a division of interests was involved between the British authorities and the Shehu. The British were motivated by their own ideas of administration, i.e. to form "a chain of responsibility" from the local level up through the Shehu to the Resident, while the Shehu evidently tried to have as many fiefs created as possible in order that there would be a multitude of District Heads, thereby increasing the number of offices with which he could reward his supporters. The matter was settled by the British who limited the number of districts to a compromise between what they believed to be the traditional structure, and what they considered to be a workable arrangement in terms of their own requirements of administering the Emirate.

175
648
634
632 When the District Head arrived in his District with his retinue of supporters he found that the local Village Headmen (the Lawan), who were strange to him, were being supported by the British because of their hereditary claims to village leadership. The British soon discovered that it had been the policy of the traditional fief-holder "to supplant the hereditary headmen by slaves (or followers) of the Chima."(1) Nevertheless, when a new fief-holder took office they conducted investigations to find who were the pre-British (and usually pre-Rabeh) Village Headmen and proceeded to appoint these people as Village Heads. In following this policy a political structure was created which utilized two potentially conflicting principles of social organization. In appointing District Heads the personal relationships of upper class leaders to the Shehu was considered to be the acceptable criteria, while the hereditary claims of local leaders were considered to be the basis for Village Headships. Thus,

(1) Patterson, J.R. Report on Nagumeri District 1920; in Nagumeri District Notebook; Provincial Office, Maiduguri, Bornu Prov. Nigeria.

3: Cohen E-4,5 (1956-1957) 1960 MS14 Kanuri MS14

175 648 634 632 the new District Head going out to his district was confronted with a situation in which he had a territory comprising a group of villages which were to be under his organized administration, and which were at the same time headed by people with whom he had no personal relationships.

Entering into this situation, the District Head responded in several ways. He could try to win the loyalty of the local Village Heads to himself, or conversely some Village Heads, sensing danger in the new situation, might come to the District Head and ask to be "his man." This meant that the District Head had expanded his following to include the Village Head. However, there were obstacles to this simple method of rapprochement. If the Village Head already had a strong functioning relationship to some other "big man" in the Kanuri state who was a powerful person in the post-1900 organization, or if the District Head was anxious to reward his own supporters with lucrative and prestige giving roles, 175 648 634 632 then this method was not too successful. The District Head could also try to manipulate the situation so that the Village Heads who he found the most truculent in accepting his overlordship, were regarded as inefficient, corrupt, or immoral in the eyes of the British, so that they would be deposed and then he could replace them with recruits from among his own following. Thus, in 1919, a British District Officer (D.O.) visiting Magumeri District, was told by Abba Kiari, then District Head of Magumeri, that two of the Village Heads in his District were inefficient and should be deposed. He felt also that because of the proximity of the two towns they should be united under one Village Head, and he offered one of his own followers as the logical candidate for the new appointment.(1) Finally, the District Head could simply carry on as if the British were

(1) Whitely: Report on Magumeri 1919; in Magumeri District Notebook

• 175
648 not present and appoint chima gana to live in each village of the Dis-
634
632 trict, who would collect taxes, levy fines, and hold judicial hearings,
661 i.e. act as Village Headmen even though incumbents for these roles had already been appointed by the British. This led to an order by the Resident of Bornu in 1910 to the effect that no District Head could station his men in any of the towns of his District with the exception of his own headquarters. However, the provincial records indicate that the chima problem plagued the administration right up until the 1930's.

175
648 Besides the structural difficulties which resulted in the
651 political organization from the colonial contact, a major functional prob-
631 lem emerged in the area of taxation. By 1904 a tax collection system based on assessments made from rough estimates was instituted. Each village was assessed as a whole and the money turned into the Government (at first the Resident, later the Native Authority Treasury) through the District Head of each district. However, the Kanuri pre-British concept of taxation persisted long after British attempts to introduce their own concepts. The British attempted to introduce the idea that the District Head and the Village Heads under him were political functionaries or agents whose task it was to collect taxes, and not levy them as well.

[178] Although well known, this idea has not really ever been transferred from British culture to Kanuri ideas on tax collection and, as we shall see, what amounts to tax levies by local officials in excess of government requirements is almost a universal practice in Bornu today.

[166] The British soon found that "extortion" was being used to collect taxes. Discoveries were made by touring D.O.'s of peasants who would complain of excess taxation, or Village Heads whose prerogatives were being usurped by a chima, or in extreme cases by the emigration of peasants

175
648
631
651
[166]

out of a very highly taxed District.(1) The net result was a high turn over in chiefs both at the District and village level, through the utilisation by the British of their powers of deposition of chiefs, and a continuation of Kanuri rather than British concepts of taxation.

175
648
645

In 1914, a new Resident took over the province and began to strengthen the Emirate political structure at its center.(2) He instituted a Shehu's council with a Wasiri as its head, and issued instructions that no European officer was to give direct instructions to District Heads. All directives were to be made through the Shehu and his council. This council, starting originally with two members, grew steadily in size and function. By the late 1940's it resembled a kind of local cabinet with the Wasiri as its head under the titular headship of the Shehu and with each member having at least one portfolio. That is to say, the members of this Council have come more and more to function as the heads of civil service departments.

All African political organization, both traditional and introduced, was called the Native Administration by Lugard and his followers and the Emirate departments of works, forestry, education, veterinary services, etc., were dubbed the N.A. departments, for that particular Emirate. This distinguished them from the government provincial departments who administered and guided the policies and actions of all the N.A.'s in the province.

175
463
871
[167]

The newly introduced European governmental services demanded some degree of western education and trained clerks from other parts of Nigeria were brought into Bornu to fill the host of small jobs which were necessary to a growing administration.

(1) In the Mobber, Geidam, Magumeri and Nguzmi District Notebooks, notations have been made throughout the colonial period of complaints by peasants who reported that they had moved from one district to another because of excessive taxation.

(2) In 1914, the British swiftly and with little opposition took over the German Cameroons, half of which were ceded to them after the War.

175 871 necessary to a growing administration. In Bornu, a provincial school was set up in Maiduguri in 1915 with eleven pupils which taught Hausa and Kanuri (using English script) and arithmetic.(1) Muslim religious knowledge and Arabic were also made part of the curriculum, while English did not come in until somewhat later. By 1916 there were 74 pupils all drawn from the ranks of the aristocracy.

According to the opinion of contemporary officials who have worked in several areas of northern Nigeria, European education in Bornu is far behind that of any other province in the region. Certainly most of the schools that can be seen today are usually less than 10 years old, so that education in the European sense of the word has only recently been made available in any appreciable extent to the people of Bornu. Today each District has at least one small elementary school and the provincial secondary school has been enlarged. 175 871 167 This dearth of western educated personnel has brought to Bornu many outsiders to fill the necessary jobs which the European and his record-keeping culture and technology require. Due to over-population and a much longer tradition of western education in their own area, a large number of these have been Ibo people from southeast Nigeria.

175 361 [132] In 1907 the British plan to rebuild the old 19th century capital of Kuka was abandoned due to the extreme aridity of the local area, and the capital was henceforth situated at Maiduguri on the Alo river basin. Kuka soon dwindled in size and became a rural village. 175 369 433 178 On the other hand, the new capital which had previously had a fairly large market could not produce enough grain to feed the suddenly expanded population which flowed in when it became the center of the Emirate. It was therefore found necessary from 1907 to 1914 to force

(1) Annual Report Bornu Province; 1915

3: Cohen E-4,5 (1956-1957) 1960 MS14 Kanuri MS14

175
369
433
178

the Districts adjacent to the new capital to take turns bringing in to Maiduguri approximately 10 (1) tons of millet per week in excess of the amount usually brought to market. This was to ensure that the expanded urban population might have enough grain available for sale to meet its needs. In a similar but less spectacular manner each District headquarters became an expanded market town when the fief-holders came there to live bringing with them their large following and specialized needs. Thus inadvertently and concomitantly to the political reorganization which the British carried on, an economic [565] readjustment was made. The consumptive needs of the large upper class which moved to Maiduguri, and the smaller enclaves of this same class which had moved out to the Districts had to be satisfied. That is to say, new nuclei of consumption were created in the Kanuri state [491] while others were abandoned or made smaller. Distributive channels of consumption and production developed in response to these changes in the settlement patterns of the non-productive upper class and roads were built connecting the District capital to Maiduguri and linking one District capital to another.

175
439
[567]

In other aspects of economic activity, the British quite strenuously put down the slave trade and helped promote the growth of trade from Bornu towards the west (Kano) and south. (2) This soon brought the Bornu-Tripoli trade to a sad end, and Bornu's primary source of external trade came from its position in Nigeria and the west coast of Africa. At first, gum arabic and skins formed the major export

(1) The Annual Report for 1907 gives the figure as 800 ss (one ss is approximately equal to 25 lbs).

(2) An ex-slave trader in Bornu reported that his last raid had been conducted circa 1921-2. He gave up the trade because of the strong opposition from the European authorities which made the trade lucrative but dangerous.

175
439

items while cloth was the largest import. However from 1925 on-
175 wards, groundnuts increased in importance as an export crop. The
436 government introduced a sterling coin currency which slowly replaced the Maria Theresa dollar as the most generally accepted medium of exchange. In the annual report of 1915 there was a complaint by the Resident of Bornu that the European trading companies were not giving currency for purchases but were paying for goods in cloth which the native middlemen were then selling, sometimes at a loss, in order to obtain cash. This seems to indicate that by 1915 currency was in universal demand, and that barter trade was dying out. After some pressure by the government the European traders dropped their bartering practices and began to use the present system of cash credit.
175 The Companies advanced credit to a limited number of middlemen who
441
452 then bought company goods for resale at local markets, and/or used the money to purchase export items for sale to the credit-advancing
175 Company. At first the African traders dealing with the Companies
441 were few and their volume not impressive. The desire of the Europe-
452
563 ans to expand trading volume, plus the willingness and ability of
[167] Levantine traders to take larger amounts of credit, soon encouraged a small but very active minority of Arab speaking traders from North Africa, the Near East and the Sudan to enter Bornu. These acted as middlemen between the European trading Companies and the more numerous African traders. The result was that a small group of Arab-speaking traders were established in Maiduguri who absorbed a large proportion of the available credit from the European Companies and filtered it, second-hand as it were, into the economy of Bornu.

The European trade in Bornu, like that of many parts of

175 441 452 The European trade in Bornu, like that of many parts of West Africa, developed a distinctive quality which arose primarily as a result of the dearth of available excess capital at the local level which could be utilised for trade. For this reason competition among the European traders involved a strong competition in the financing of tradeas well as the more usual aspects of commerce, like price, quality and sole distributorships. Although the major part of this competition went on between Europeans for the Arab speaking traders it also served as a stimulus in expanding the number of traders in the native population.

175 439 The other relatively distinctive feature of the Bornu trade was the small number of Companies which participated in it at the European level. By the early 1920's almost the entire trade of Bornu to and from western Europe was handled by five or six large firms. Bauer has shown how this paucity was not only a commercial development but was encouraged by government who found it easier to deal with a few well established firms rather than a number of small ones. (1)

175 177 648 The outside influences coming into Bornu after 1900 were thus of a two pronged variety which set up various responses in the political and economic spheres of local life. Up until the second world war, the main concern of the colonial official was to make the policy of indirect rule work, while always trying to force a more comprehensive understanding and conformity to the general values and standards of English culture. The theme for all annual reports running from circa 1914 to circa 1944 can be best expressed in the oft repeated phrase "steady progress." Each year tax collections were a little better, a few more students were attending the provincial

(1) Bauer P.T. West African Trade: (Cambridge University Press) 1954, pp. 150-156.

175
177
648

schools, a few more roads were built or improved and once in a while extended, local European trading Companies reported "steady progress" in business volume, living conditions in the province for European staff "steadily improved", medical facilities "steadily expanded" and so on. Certainly there always seemed to be a rather high turn over in chiefs, but this came to be part of the expected regularity of life in Bornu.

What in effect had occurred was an adjustment. The British administration had set up the organisation of its indirect rule and the task of each new Resident Officer in Bornu was to implement Lord Lugard's policies to the best of his abilities. The general methods of resistance to the English administration were well known by both the Kanuri and the English and no jarring outside influence entered the scene to upset the gentlemanly tug-of-war which characterized the colonial contacts as a kind of game in which everyone knew the rules and the conditions of play, while the over-all techniques of the players did not change much through time.

175
648
634
[127]

How the "game" was played at the political level can be seen in the following example of the deposition of a chief, taken from the provincial records at Maiduguri, concerning the District Head of Mobber between 1929 and 1931.(1) Mobber District is in the extreme northeast of Bornu Emirate on the border between Nigeria and French West Africa. Its relative isolation from British surveillance contributed to the maintenance of officially prohibited practices well into the late 1920's.

During 1929, a touring officer (British) reported that

(1) c.f. Mobber District File; Provincial Office, Maiduguri.

175 648 634 632 During 1929, a touring officer (British) reported that there were indications of widespread "extortion" of the peasants of Mobber District by the District Head and his chimas. In May of 1930, Mr. Reed, an A.D.O., was sent up to Mobber to investigate the situation. He reported that the District Head had stationed his chimas in many of the towns of the District. These subalterns were exercising judicial authority, administering whippings and raising levies for themselves and the District Head. The latter when questioned admitted that he was operating through chimas but complained that the Lawans (traditional Village Heads) were for the most part hostile to him. Mr. Reed told the District Head to abolish the chima system and tour himself. The District Head pleaded that he needed to have his own followers in the outer towns of his District to maintain order. The A.D.O. agreed and said he would return in about a month's time to see if the reforms had been carried out. On the return of Mr. Reed in June the situation had not changed appreciably and the A.D.O. arrested five of the most complained against chimas (by the villagers and Village Heads of the "chima's town") and took them to Maiduguri for hearings on the matter.

175 648 634 643 692 On July 7th, 1930, the Shehu, during an interview with the Resident, mentioned that the District Head of Mobber had requested the removal of the Mobber District judge on the grounds of ignorance and inefficiency. Upon questioning, the Shehu advanced the opinion that this request might be due to bad feeling between the District Head and the Alkali (judge). In his turn, the Resident opined that it might more particularly be the case that the judge disapproved of the District Head's illegal use of chimas and raising of personal tax levies.

175
648
634
643

In another meeting between the Shehu and the Resident later that month, the Mobber matter was brought up again and the Shehu agreed that things did not seem to be going too well in Mobber. On the 14th of August, the Shehu suggested to the Resident when the Mobber misdemeanours were mentioned that the Mobber peasants were an extremely difficult group to manage and possibly chimas might be required for the proper administration of the District. At the end of August the Shehu requested of the Resident that the five men who had been arrested by A.D.O. Reed be sent back to their homes. The Resident agreed in principle, but felt that the one who had beaten a villager should be kept in Maiduguri for a little longer yet. He added that the men could be sent back to their homes only if the Shehu would take full responsibility for any further trouble in the Mobber area.

175
648
634

In September and again in October of 1930, A.D.O. Reed was sent up to check the situation in Mobber District. The chimas were operating as before and the District Head was reported as being "not respectful" to the British officer on tour. Only one change [632] had occurred. An entire village area appeared to have been relinquished by the District Head since one of the Shehu's sons had been appointed its Lawan (Village Head) by the Wazirí.

Several months later in February 1931, the District Head of Mobber appeared in Maiduguri for an annual meeting and was warned by the Resident that "unless considerable improvement was shown he would be dismissed." From this point on, there were very few items in the Mobber District file in which the "Mobber case" was actually referred to. One short item tells of a rumour picked up by a junior officer to the effect that the District Head of Mobber was a favor-

175
648
634

ite of the Shehu and was married to a daughter of the Wazir (head of the Shehu's council). By the end of 1931 the matter began to congeal. The D. O. of Bornu Emirate wrote a note to the Resident claiming that the time had come to dispose of the District Head of Mobber since he obviously would not reform, and then suggested several names as replacements. In early 1932 the matter was mentioned briefly in a report to the Secretary of the Northern Provinces from the Resident of Bornu. It stated that "the Shehu and Council have found it necessary to depose the District Head of Mobber." Several people were nominated by the D. O. and by the Council for the replacement and the matter was closed when a man suggested by the Council was mentioned in reports as the new District Head of Mobber.

The British administrators had tried to persuade the District Head of Mobber for two years to stop using his own system of political organization and work through the Village Heads, i.e., the political structure recognized by themselves. His inability to comply finally brought about his removal. But the entire push and pull of the deposition did not materially disturb relations between the British and the political leadership of Bornu.

175
648

[631]

Certainly the case hints at a well-organized Kanuri political system operating independently of the one formally recog-

[643]

nized by the British. However, it also illustrates the formalized and balanced relationship which existed between the Resident and the Shehu. The Resident patiently tried to press forward with his own conception of government, while the Shehu was at the same time attempting to mollify English demands in order that the Emirate political organization could be maintained unmolested. The unsettling feature of the relations between the Kanuri and the English

• 175
648 political organization was the activities of the touring officer who might, by contacting local complaints, discover a necessity for reform which could bring British power into play in the Bornu political structure.

178 This relatively stable accommodation of the 1930's re-
434 vealed, by such examples as the Mobber case, has been upset by recent
[435] events in the post World War II period. The rapid rise in the price paid for groundnuts (the cash crop) from £3 to £11 per ton in 1946 caused the Resident to report "we are witnessing an economic change . . . possibly a revolution . . . for the farmer is now in command of a ready supply of cash . . . and for the first time the peasant has in his hands more money than he knows how to spend."(1) Again in 1947 he comments, "money is pouring into the hands of the people and there is nothing for them to spend it on . . . Money is available in great quantity for development but we can do little for want of staff and materials."(2) The post-war boom aided and abetted by the mustering out pay of the returning soldiers(3) had hit Bornu unprepared.

178 In actual fact, there was not so much confusion on the
433 part of the peasant over what to do with his new found wealth as
648 there was on the part of the administration as to what to do with theirs. The trading companies quickly expanded both import and export facilities to meet the rapid increase in income and consumption. There is no indication of inability to spend money either in the published figures of Nigerian commerce, or in the memories of contemp-

(1) Annual Report Bornu Province; 1946
(2) Annual Report Bornu Province; 1947
(3) Pedlar, F.J. A Study of Income and Expenditure in Northern Zaria; in Africa 18, 259-271, 1948.

• 175
631
661 Good examples of these conflicts can be seen in some of the recorded history of Magumeri District in the last fifty years. From 1921 to 1929, Lawan Tayil, a follower of the DH, is only mentioned briefly and always alluded to as a competent Lawan. After the DH left the District in 1929 and was replaced by a new one, adverse reports by British officers (who had talked to the new DH) became more and more common. It was noted that Lawan Tayil was unpopular with the people, that there was emigration out of his village area due to exhortative taxation, and that he was disrespectful to those in authority. In 1934 he was deposed and a younger brother of the new DH was installed
631 as Lawan. Examples like this are extremely common from Magumeri's
661 recent past as well as from the other Districts. This is reflected in the length of term of Lawans in office, taken from three widely separated Districts. The average length of tenure for a Lawan who is the follower of reigning Lawan is ten years if the DH remains in the District; on the other hand, the average length of tenure for a Lawan (in the District capital) is four years after a DH has left the District.

There is a tendency indicated in the historical records
631 for DH's to appoint younger brothers as Lawans. But this has its lim-
661 its; sometimes kin are passed over, or relationships are broken because
662 a kin member feels that he will be held responsible for his kinsman's behaviour. Thus in 1935, the Lawan of Magumeri asked the British authorities if he could be moved to another District away from the hegemony of an older brother who was his DH. By 1935 the British had received a great many complaints from Magumeri District about the oppressive taxation of the DH. Thus the DH's younger brother sensing that trouble was brewing for the DH, felt that it would be more advantageous for his own political career if he were out of his older brother's District,

(sic)

[p 329]

Chapter X

Summary and Conclusions

178
642 The description of pre-Colonial Bornu has indicated that despite the rise and fall of its fortune the Kanuri political organization has had a remarkable resiliency throughout the last millenium. As long as the system of feudal organization remained with its nucleus at the capital city and court of the monarch, then the rise and fall of the empire was not fatal to its continuity. Kanuri feudalism is a segmentary corporate political structure; while the top remains intact, the expansion and contraction of the State itself bears no relation to its survival.

• 175
648
631 The traditional background from which the present society obtains its roots has been altered in this century by contact with British colonialism. In Northern Nigeria the administration was deeply affected by the views of its founder Lugard, whose own control of the organization of the regional colonial service ensured that many of its norms, procedures and its overall policy would be an embodiment of his personal philosophy of colonialism. In Bornu, this meant that the pre-Rabeh Kanuri leaders regained their old positions, the Shehu was placed at the head of the State (now called the Bornu Emirate), and the fief-holders now called District Heads or Ajias, went to live in "bush" on their respective fiefs. The Village Heads within each district were appointed because of hereditary claims to the position while the District Heads over them were chosen because of their relationship to the monarch and/or other powerful groups at the capital. This set up possible conflicts between DH's and the Village Heads in their districts
175 which has lasted to the present day. The policy of the British was to
648 rule through and strengthen the authority of the native leaders, while
642

175 enforcing compliance with the "fundamental laws of humanity" (which
648 rule out the slave trade). The European and the African were to co-
642 operate in administering the country but live separate lives socially,
[563] while western ideas and technology were to be introduced slowly when and if they would be acceptable, and only when capable of being financed on local revenues.

175 Out of this organization there grew a readily identifiable
648 English sub-culture whose uniqueness was a product of its particular
563 English upper class background and its adjustment to the common stimulus of Northern Nigeria. Their standards of administrative judgment came from Lugard and their common origins in English society; their hopes and fears, frustrations and satisfactions, grew out of the common work situation to be found in the British administration of the northern Emirates.

Because of the dearth of trained local personnel for carrying on the day to day office work and record-keeping of administration, the southern Nigerian, predominantly the Ibo, was introduced to Bornu. They soon came as skilled and semi-skilled labourers, carpenters, builders, bricklayers, mechanics and traders, and so in Bornu a minority group of southerners, mostly Christian, and more acculturated to Western ways became an established, although separate, part of the society.

175 After the inception of colonial rule the interaction be-
648 tween the British administration and the native political organization soon settled into a fairly steady pattern in which the British pushed continually for conformity to their own values in political organization, education, taxation, trade, etc. The Bornu officials and others who contacted the British, in their response, maintained as much of Kanuri culture as they could while at the same time learning what to

175 expect from the Europeans whose consistency was an expression of the
648 British sub-cultural unity. This balance was upset by the second world war, whose post-war boom and the Nigerian independence movement wrought rapid changes in the contemporary scene in Bornu.

177 At the peasant level, changes have not been cataclysmic. The
178 ending of the slave trade and the pacification of the country from constant wars, especially the remembered ravages of Rabeh, are frequently referred to by the peasants as the most valued changes which have been
[433] instituted since the coming of the British. However, from an analytical point of view, the universal spread of a cash economy and the production of cash crops to all levels of the peasant society during the last fifty years is a significant development of no less importance than the conscious value placed upon the pacification. With minor exceptions the arrival of the European has not changed the social relations between the peasant and his fellows, and between the peasant and the
[494] chiefs. The development of roads, and the coming of the "lorries" allowed for more mobility, and has slowly expanded the possibilities of settlement for the Kanuri peasant to include not only all of Bornu, but the entire Northern Region, at least for the more adventurous. However, house types, methods of farming, law, religion, local social organization, and most importantly basic values, have continued in the time honoured manner of the past.

177 The introduction of the few European trading houses has
441 served as a stimulus of profound and continuing effect in the total Bornu society. It has brought the Arab-speaking middlemen who absorb a large proportion of available credit, which the Companies use as a primary item of competition due to the lack of local capital for investment in the area. The trade, and its outside capital, has intro-

4: Cohen E-5 (1956-1957) 1961
MS14 Kanuri MS14

121 work. This means that minute details of innovation and social life in general can be recorded at the level of the "common man" as contrasted with the analysis of regional or national productivity figures, or of government policies, or United Nations statistics. What emerges is not, therefore, a total picture of the development process, but rather a grass roots view of the reaction to planned culture change by the people at whom the programme was aimed in the first place.

The purpose of this article is to document and analyse an innovation that succeeded technically, and yet failed because the human components of the innovation experience were not taken into account.

101 The place is Africa, the time is 1956-57. But it could very well be the Near East, Asia or South America, anytime between 1940 and 1960. The people are the Kanuri of Bornu Province, Northern Nigeria, but they could be peasants anywhere.

The Context

174 The Kanuri of Bornu province in northeastern Nigeria have
175 been organized as a Muslim emirate in the Chad basin for
[131] many centuries. Their language classification by Greenberg
[642] (1954), early Arabic sources, and the scattered work of a few interested scholars, supports the notion of their continuity in the region, with possible origins somewhere to the northeast of
[177] their present habitat. The pre-colonial emirate kept up continual trade and cultural contacts with the Maghreb during its long history as an organized state.

161 The Kanuri number about one and a half million. The
311 population density is approximately sixty per square mile and there is no pressure on farmland, which can be extended simply by clearing new bush areas further away from the population
433 settlements. The majority of the people are peasants who carry
241 on three analytically separable economic activities. These consist
44 of (1) farming, primarily millet and guinea corn, supplemented by maize, beans, squashes, cucumbers, and groundnuts, (2) cash
[434] cropping, mostly groundnuts, and (3) a dry season non-farming activity connected with the market. Market activities are in